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Jer. Smith

PRACTICAL
DISCOURSES
On Several
Important Subjects:
VIZ.

A Discourse of the Children of Holy Parents.

Eight Discourses of the Covenant of Grace.

To which are Added,

A Brief Discourse of Infant-Baptism.

A Sermon before the *Lord-Mayor*.

By the Late Reverend,

Mr. *NATHANAEL TAYLOR*.

LONDON,

Printed for *John Lawrence* at the *Angel* in the *Poultry*. 1703.

TO THE
READER.

THE Posthumous *Papers of the Reverend Author, were committed to my care by his Executors, and appear in Publick at the desire of many. The Arguments are Singular and Important, and managed with an Admirable Clearness and Strength.*

The Discourse *concerning the Children of Holy Parents, was left fairly Transcribed with his own Hand, and was designed for the Use of his own Children. And as this was a Subject peculiarly agreeable to his Temper, who in Imitation of his* Blessed Master, *was always observed to express a particular Tenderness towards Little Children; So there seems to be more of his true Spirit and peculiar Way in*

this than in any other Part of his Writings.

The Diſcourſes *upon the Covenant were his laſt Sermons at the* Merchants Lecture *at* Salters-Hall, *and were all Tranſcribed by himſelf, except the two laſt, which were recovered out of Characters, and are not ſo Exact and Perfect as the reſt. And though they had not the finiſhing ſtrokes of his* Maſterly Hand, *and he lived not to Preach the laſt he intended upon the Subject; Yet they ſeem to be diſtinguiſhed from common Writings, by the Solid Characters of a True Judgment, and the many Bright Images and Lively Strokes of a Sprightly Fancy and a Judicious Wit: And I believe they will be allowed as far as they go, by any* Indifferent Judge, *to be the beſt Practical Diſcourſes extant upon that Weighty Argument.*

I ſhall only farther remark concerning theſe Diſcourſes; That as they are the only Remains *he left behind him,*

him, like the Mantle drop'd from the Prophet *when he was ſuddenly ſnatched to Heaven ; So they contain in them a double Portion of his Spirit, and ſeem more fitted for common Benefit and capable of a more extenſive Uſefulneſs than thoſe more Learned and Elaborate Treatiſes Publiſhed by Himſelf ; that were Writ upon more Nice and Contentious Arguments, and deſigned eſpecially for the Service of the more Intelligent and Curious.*

The Two laſt Diſcourſes were Publiſhed in his Life, and were thought fit to be added, becauſe of the Affinity of the Subject, and to preſerve them from being loſt.

I ſhall not undertake to draw the Character *of this Excellent Perſon, which is already done by a fitter Hand. He has left more Laſting Monuments of his Real Worth to the World, than a Fading Picture drawn by the Ableſt Hand with the Brighteſt Colours of Eloquence. But I hope I may be al-*

In his Funeral Sermon by Mr. *Shower.*

lowed to ſay upon this Occaſion without any Suſpicion of Vanity or Preſumption ; That He was a true Friend *as well as an Admirable* Pattern *to Younger Miniſters. He was Acceſſible and Communicative ; always uſed a Generous Freedom and an Undiſguiſed Sincerity ; and underſtood the Pleaſures as well as the Secret of true Friendſhip. And I know ſeveral who think themſelves highly obliged to his Excellent Labours, even in his Younger Years, both for the right forming their own Minds, and for proper Meaſures for their own Performance.*

The Skilful Management of a well Choſen Subject ; The Juſt Decorum of Behaviour ; The Beautiful Turns of Expreſſion ; The Inimitable Force and Commanding Air with which he always ſpoke, did at once mightily Pleaſe and powerfully Inſtruct ; Fixt the Attention and raiſed the Eſteem, And gave an Admiration as well as

Delight

Delight to the more Judicious and Diſcerning.

He acted with Judgment *and* Conſcience *in the Choice of his Way, and in the Conduct of his Life. He prefered the Service of the* Altar, *and ſubmitted to the Diſadvantages of* Nonconformity, *when his great Abilities would have rendered him Conſiderable in any Communion of Chriſtians, and Capable of any other Profeſſion of Learning in the World; And as he was perfectly ſatisfied in the Cauſe he eſpouſed; ſo he was a Bright Ornament to it, and an Able Defence; as Pillars of Shining Marble or Poliſhed Braſs at once Support and Adorn the Building to which they belong.*

If any think he indulged either to his Fancy *or his* Spleen, *and that he exceeded at any time in the Dreſs or the Freedom of the Style he uſed; I ſhall only humbly offer in his Defence; That as Propriety and Strength*

run through all his Compoſures ; ſo he ſeems to have uſed no other Liberties than what were Natural to him and Undeſigning, and perhaps after all, no more different from other Mens, than the Airs of his Countenance, or the Poſtures in which he moved.

The ſurprizing Removal *of ſo accompliſhed a Perſon, furniſhed by Nature and Art ; ripened by Study and Experience ; in the Strength of his Days and in the Midſt of many uſeful Deſigns ; was a Severe and an Afflicting Stroke, and prevented the farther Expectations the World had conceived from ſo valuable a Life.*

But He is removed to Infinite Advantage to Himſelf, though to the great Loſs of the World. He is advanced to a State of Nobler Service, and to the Enjoyment of a more perfect Happineſs. He was a Lamp *in the Sanctuary of God, and a* Star

in

in the hand of Christ, to give Light to a Dark World, and guide Wandring Souls *to Heaven. But He moves in a Higher Orb, and shines with a Brighter Glory. He is a* Sun *in the Kingdom of Heaven, and a* Pillar *in the Temple of God above.*

May the great Lord *of the Harvest send forth many Faithful Labourers, and give a more Plentiful Increase, that so this Dark and Barren Wilderness, may become again the Garden of the Lord, and the Face of* Paradise *may every where appear in all the Fruits of Knowledge, Righteousness, Purity and Peace : And may many Souls be prepared for the* Paradise *above, where there are Rivers of Pleasures, and no forbidden Fruit ; where perfect Innocence and purest Joys unite ; and every one shall taste of the Tree of Life as well as the Tree of Knowledge, without the danger of a Second Fall, or the fear of a Flaming* Sword.

If

To the Reader.

If the following Discourses may be serviceable to such a purpose, under the Influence of the Divine Spirit, to any one that reads them, it will probably Increase the Triumphs and Reward of this Blessed Saint in Heaven, as I am sure it will add to the Satisfaction and Pleasure of those on Earth, especially such as were concerned in the Publication.

W. HARRIS.

THE

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In that Hour Jeſus rejoyced in Spirit, and ſaid, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou haſt hid theſe things from the Wiſe and Prudent, and haſt revealed them unto Babes; even ſo Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight. p. 305.

All the reſt of the Papers of this Reverend and Learned Perſon, are in Characters; by which means, the World will be deprived of many uſeful and valuable Tracts.

ERRATA.

PAge 18. line 15. read neceſſarily. p. 25. l. 20. add, *to*. p. 46. l. 2. add, *it*. p. 97. l. 9. r. Jota. p. 102. l. 20. r. exceſſive. p. 114. l. 20. r. moroſe. p. 115. l. 4. r. a very. p. 116. l. 18. r. ſpecial. p. 145. l. 18. add, *had*. p. 149. l. 17. dele ſerve. p. 245. r. 224, *&c.* p. 252. l. 5. add, *my*. p. 253. l. 9. add, *is*. p. 264. l. penul. r. We. p. 266. l. 25. r. Channel.

Books Written by the Reverend Author, and Printed for *John Lawrence* at the *Angel* in the *Poultry*.

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—— At the Funeral of *John Lane* Eſq; and the Lady *Mary Lane.* 4*to.*

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A

DISCOURSE

Concerning the Children of Holy Parents.

CHAP. I.

The Children of Holy Parents receive Temporal Bleſſings for their ſakes, and ſtand faireſt for Spiritual ones. This latter open'd in Six Things.

THAT 'tis a very great and valuable Privilege to be Born of Holy Parents, will appear from theſe Two Conſiderations.

I. God frequently beſtows many Temporal Bleſſings on them for their Father's ſakes. I.

II. They ſtand faireſt for Spiritual and Eternal ones. II.

I. God frequently beſtows many Temporal Bleſſings on them for their Father's ſakes. I.

The Curſe of God, like the *Air of a Peſtilence*, enters inviſibly into the Families of the Wicked: And the Bleſſing of God breaks in like the *Light of Heaven*, ſilently and without noiſe, on the Habitation of the Juſt. He hath threat'ned that he will viſit the Iniquities of the Fathers on their Children to the third and fourth Generation; but he hath more amply promiſed Mercy to thouſands of the Generations of them that love and fear him. The ſweet and gentle Streams of his Mercy towards the one run a much greater way, ſeveral hundreds of Miles; when the bitter ones of his Wrath reach but three or four at the furtheſt. 'Tis true indeed, both the Threatning and the Promiſe do imply this, that the Children do tread in the Steps of their Parents; and particularly that the Poſterity of Holy Men do ſo, without which God is not obliged to ſhew favour to them. But yet however God many times acts according to the higheſt Laws of Friendſhip, and ſhews a great deal of Kindneſs to the degenerate Off-ſpring, out of reſpect to their pious Anceſtors from whom they deſcend. The Bleſſing of God on the Parents, like the anointing Oyl pour'd out on *Aaron*'s Head, flows down to the very *Skirts* of the Garment, the meaneſt Member in the Family, yea even to the *uncomely* and *diſhonourable*

diſhonourable parts of their Body, thoſe wicked Children that are indeed the very *ſhame* and *nakedneſs* of their Father. *Iſhmael* had caſt himſelf out of the Covenant, and *Abraham* had turn'd him out of his Houſe; but God however doth not wholly caſt him out of his care. He takes this *unclean*, as well as *wandring Bird*, that was driven from his Neſt, under the Wings of his ſpecial Providence, and reſolves to multiply him into a great Nation, for this very Reaſon as he told *Abraham*, be- *Gen.* 21. cauſe he is thy Seed. For his Servant *Da-* 13. *vid*'s ſake he continued the whole Kingdom entire all his days to *Solomon* tho' he was turned an Idolator, and Idolatry in *Canaan* was no leſs than High Treaſon againſt the Theocracy. Yea on the ſame account he ſettles *One* Tribe on *Rehoboam*, tho' a mad young Rebel againſt God and a wicked Tyrant over his People. He broke off *Ten* of the Lamps from that *branch of Gold*, but continues *One* of them to him, that ſo therein his Servant *David* might have *a Light burning always before* 1 *Kings*, *him*. How often did he take up his *Pen* 11. 34. into his Hand to *blot* the whole Name of *Iſrael* out of his Book: But when he open'd it in order thereunto, he ſaw the Names of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, in the beginning of it; and for the ſake of thoſe *Letters of Gold* that were in the

front of the first Page, the whole *Volume* was spared, tho' fill'd with many gross and foul *Erratas*.

II. II. The Children of Holy Parents stand fairest for Spiritual and Eternal Blessings. This I will evince by these Six following Considerations, shewing the many Advantages they have to this end above the Children of others.

1. They have the advantages of a Covenant Relation to God, of being Members of the visible Church, and of having the initiating Seal of the Covenant applied to them in their Infancy. I join these together, because like the Links of a Chain they have a mutual Connexion, and take hold one on the other. All three of them did belong to the natural Posterity of *Abraham* till God broke them off; and believing Gentiles are engraffed
Rom. 11. into the same Olive Tree in their room; and the Grace of the Gospel is not sure narrower, but much larger than it was under the Legal Dispensation. 'Tis the whole Scope and Design of the Apostle throughout the Third Chapter to the *Galatians*, to prove, that the Covenant of *Abraham* is still in force and being; and that *his Blessing* is come upon us. Now this was the Blessing wherewith our Father was blest, and that wherein all his Happiness was summ'd up, *I will be a God*

God to thee, and to thy Seed after thee. And that there might be no doubt of this matter, he tells us, that the descending Blessing which he means, was that great Promise wherein these Words are, *And to thy Seed.* Now there is no other Promise made to him upon Record wherein those Words are, but that, *I will be a God to thee and thy Seed*, except that other of inheriting the Land of *Canaan*, which no one can imagine to be here meant by the Apostle.

Further, that the Privilege of being Members of the visible Church of Christ doth still belong to such Children, is evident from the Discourse of the same Apostle in another Epistle, where he treats of the rejection of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles. He tells us, that not all, but only *some* of the Jews were broken off from the visible Church: And they were broken off meerly on the account of their positive unbelief or rejection of Christ. Consequently the Infants of the believing Jews were not broken off. For if they were so, it must be either for their *own* unbelief, a (Sin which by reason of their Age, they are not capable of being guilty of) or it must be for their *Parents unbelief*, which could not be, because we do suppose them to have been Believers. Their Children therefore did keep their

Rom. 11. *v.* 17.

ancient ſtanding; now in Chriſt there is neither Jew nor Gentile; the natural Poſterity of Believers, whether of the Circumciſion or Uncircumciſion ſtand on even ground.

Again; That Church-ſtate which the unbelieving Jews were broken off from, they ſhall, on their Converſion, be reſtored to afreſh: For then they ſhall be graffed into their own Olive Tree. Now in the Judgment of our Adverſaries themſelves, it would not be their OWN, but ANOTHER Olive Tree, and ANOTHER Church of a quite *differing* Conſtitution, if their Infants were not included as Members of it. And yet v. 24.

Again, Believing Gentiles are graffed in to the SAME Olive Tree, or the SAME Church ſtate wherein the believing Jews did remain, and from which the others were broken off; (for v. 17. *ſome of the Branches were broken off, and thou being a wild Olive Tree wert graffed in AMONG them, and WITH them partakeſt of the Root and fatneſs of the Olive Tree.*) And therefore into ſuch a Church as the natural Children of Holy Men are included in as Members of it.

Further, That the Privilege of a Baptiſmal Dedication unto God doth belong to them, as it naturally follows from the Two foregoing Particulars; ſo it will further

ther appear from those known Words that have been often urged to this purpose, *Thou shalt keep my Covenant therefore, thou and thy Seed after thee in their Generation.* This is an universal Command laid on all the Seed of *Abraham*, and consequently reaches believing Gentiles under the Gospel; for they are *Abraham*'s Seed. And 'tis inferr'd from the Promise of being a God to him and his, as appears from the Word THEREFORE. Consequently if that Promise belong to Holy Men in these Gospel days, (as was before proved it doth) this Duty doth oblige them too. And by the KEEPING of the Covenant we are in part to understand the putting the initiating dedicating Sign of the Covenant, for the time being, whatsoever it should be, will appear hence, because the NOT putting of that Sign upon their Infants is called a BREAKING of the Covenant. If the not applying that Sign to their Children be in the judgment of God himself a breaking of the Covenant, then the applying it is in part a keeping of it. And 'tis observable, that this is a General Command, distinct from that Particular one of Circumcision, which comes after it in the following Verse. 'Tis, I say, a General Command, enjoining the putting the Sign and Seal of the Covenant on Infants

Gen. 17 9.

v. 14.

whatever it ſhould be, which once was Circumciſion, but now is Holy Baptiſm. So that here is an expreſs Command to all the Seed of *Abraham* (and believing Gentiles are his Seed) for the Baptizing their Infants; tho' not in the particular term of *Baptiſm*, yet under this general Notion of the *token* of the Covenant, and keeping of it.

Now all theſe three things are very conſiderable advantages and helps to ſuch Children. For if they ſtand in a *Covenant Relation* to God, if they are *Members of the viſible Church*, and have the *Sign and Seal of the Covenant* on them, then they are a People *nigh* unto God, whereas others are *afar off*. Their very Names are in the Bond. They are parts of that Society to which the Promiſes are made; Members of that Body whereof Chriſt is the Head and Saviour; have a ſpecial Intereſt in the Prayers of all God's People, who tho' they intercede for all the World, yet do ſo in a particular manner for thoſe that belong to the ſame Society with themſelves; and they are under the ſpecial providential Care of Chriſt, who is the Lord and Ruler of the World indeed, but the Head over all things to his Church. Hereby God's Right to us is ſignified; we are in the beginning of our days pre-engaged to him; his Mark

is

upon us, we are his Sons and his Daughters; he hath a ſpecial Intereſt in us; we are not unclean, but federally holy to God. Such Children are born in and belong to thoſe Houſes, to whom Salvation in an eſpecial manner doth belong. For ſo ſaid Chriſt to *Zachæus*, *This day is Salvation come to thy Houſe*, becauſe he the Maſter of it was a Child of *Abraham*. And ſaith St. *Paul* to the Jaylor, *Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved, thou and thy Houſe*. Implying, that ſome ſpecial Privilege hereby would redound to his Houſe, *i. e.* his Children, above what the Children of his Neighbours did enjoy.

Ezek. 16. 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. *Luke* 19. 9. *Acts* 16. 31.

And as a Senſe of all this hath a natural tendency in it to make deep and awful Impreſſions on our Minds while we are young, and as we grow up; to draw forth our love to God and Chriſt; to increaſe our confidence in them; to engage us to walk obediently before them that have ſhewn ſuch tender Mercies towards us in our tender Years, when we were not capable of thinking of them, much leſs of performing any actual Service to them; and furniſh us with ſtronger Pleas to urge them withal in Prayer for renewing Grace than the Children of others can make uſe of: So it lays a mighty and powerful Obligation on Religious Parents to

to train us up for God by a holy Education, which is the

2*d*. Advantage of ſuch Children. And a Religious Education is certainly a very great one. You have been trained up in Knowledge, others in Ignorance. You have had good Examples, and they have had very bad ones. You have from your Child-hood been nurs'd up in a good Opinion of the truths and ways of God; they have had wicked Prejudices againſt both inſtilled into them betimes, and riveted in them by inſenſible degrees; and neither of theſe are eaſily ſhaken off. You have ('tis to be preſumed) many ſeaſonable Corrections, Counſels, Admonitions, Exhortations and Prayers which they have wanted. You are kept out of the Road of Temptation, ſo are not they. You can't ſin at ſo eaſie a rate; Modeſty and natural Conſcience, Shame and Fear are powerful reſtraints on you: Whereas they were bred up as they were born, like a wild Aſſes Colt, and never had this Bridle put into their Mouths. You are brought to ſit under the means of Grace, and the miniſtry of the Word, which they are taught to ſlight, and deride, and turn their Backs upon. And having all theſe Advantages from a pious Education, hence it follows.

3. Such

3. Such God uſually begins to work on more early, waits on them longer, follows them with more offers of his Grace than he doth others, and don't uſe to caſt them off, till they are wholly deſperate.

He begins *more Early* with them. Ye are the children of the Prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with our Fathers, ſaying unto *Abraham*, *In thy ſeed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed.* Acts 3. 25. And then it follows *unto you FIRST. God having raiſed up his Son Jeſus, ſent him to bleſs you in turning you away from your Iniquities.* Our Lord himſelf in the days of his Fleſh, preached not to the Gentiles, but to the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of *Iſrael*; and forbids his Apoſtles going to the former when he ſent them to the latter. And after his Reſurrection, tho' their Hands had been embrued in his Blood, he commiſſions his Servants to go to them in the *firſt* place, and they had the refuſal of the Goſpel. Theſe he calls Children, and counts the others as Dogs; offers Bread to the one, but can hardly be perſwaded to afford a few Crumbs to the other. Indeed the Spirit of God is wont to be dealing with the Hearts of ſuch young ones very betimes; working many a good Inclination in them, impreſſing many a ſerious Conviction very deep upon them, and notably ſtirring up their Affections,

Affections, ſo that all that know them are apt to conceive very great hopes of them.

And tho' they break away from under the Spirits hand, yet he purſues after them, and lays hold on them again and again; ſhoots many an Arrow of Conviction after theſe Birds as they are upon the Wing flying away from him; follows them with many repeated offers of his Grace, many calls of his Goſpel, many motions of his Spirit, and many checks of their own Conſciences, being moſt unwilling that theſe Men ſhould periſh, becauſe he would not have the ancient Relation between himſelf and the Families whence they ſprung, broken off: And ſometimes when he hath taken up his Axe into his hand, as tho' he would fell them with one blow, and ſo put an end to the day of their Lives and Grace both together, immediately he repents of what he thought to have done, lays the fatal Inſtrument down, and reſolves to wait yet another Year or two. The patience of God waited on the Jews after their Crucifying of Chriſt, tho' that heinous ſin ſeem'd to have fill'd up the Meaſure of their Iniquities, no leſs than 40 Years, and cauſed his Goſpel to be preached in all their Cities with the expence of the Sweat and Blood of his Meſſengers, to ſee whither at laſt they would

would hearken to it. And if in all that time they would but have ſuffer'd themſelves to have been gather'd under his Wing they had been ſafe there, and the Roman Eagles had never ſeized upon them as their Prey. He could not find in his heart to deſtroy them, till he was quite tired and worn out, and groan'd under the burden of their Provocations, and could bear no longer with them. Such God is not wont to give over, till there's no hope of doing any good upon them. *Iſhmael* was a ſcoffer, which argues a very vile and depraved temper of Mind, and *Eſau* a prophane Perſon that deſpiſed and ſold his Birth-right for a trifle, before God caſt them off.

Now from hence it follows, as might rationally be expected that,

4*thly*, Saving Grace uſes to be beſtowed on ſuch more frequently than on the Children of other Men.

I don't ſay 'tis *always* given to them. *Abraham* had an *Iſhmael*; corrupt and *rotten* Fruit that dropt from a *good Tree.*

Nor do I ſay 'tis always denied to others. Vile *Jeroboam* had an *Abijah*, in whom was ſome good thing towards God, that ſprung from his Loins, like a young *green Tree* ſprouting out of a *Stone Wall.* By the former God ſhews the ſoveraignty

and

and liberty of his Grace, by the later the Riches, and the mighty power of it.

But a little Obſervation will convince you, that generally Religious Families are the Nurſeries of the Churches of Chriſt, which are upheld chiefly by a ſupply of new Members drawn from them. Converts come in but ſlowly, then conſider,

5. When others are converted, 'tis for this Reaſon (among the reſt) to fill up the room of thoſe ungodly Children of Holy Parents that would not turn to God, and to provoke them to come in at laſt. *Abraham* muſt have a Seed ſome where; and if the Children of the *Fleſh* do degenerate, rather than he ſhall want, God will raiſe them up to him out of the very *Stones*. If the Children of Holy Men prove obſtinate and rebellious, the Spirit of God departs from them, but then he doth it in ſuch a manner as ſhews ſome remains of Affection to them that do ſo unkindly drive him away. For when he leaves them, he reſteth on the Children of ungodly Men, that he may, if poſſible, hereby provoke them to Jealouſie by them that were *no People*, when they ſee their Privileges taken away from them, and given to the moſt unlikely perſons before their Faces. Remarkable is that ſaying of *Paul* and *Barnabas* to the Jews, *It was* neceſ-

Rom 10. 19.

neceſſary *that the word of God ſhould* firſt *have been ſpoken unto you*; *but* ſeeing ye put it from *you, and judge your ſelves unworthy of everlaſting Life, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* The natural Branches run quite wild, and therefore are cut off; and for that reaſon other Branches are graffed in their room and ſtead; but 'tis contrary to Nature; becauſe God will do Miracles but that he will have ſome to bring forth good Fruit. The falling of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles, and through it Salvation came unto them: the caſting away of them was the reconciling of the World; and the Gentiles obtained Mercy through the Jews Unbelief. And one deſign of God in all this, and of his Apoſtle in inſiſting ſo much on it, was, to provoke theſe Jews hereby to Jealouſie, and to Emulation, that he might ſave them. *That*, ſaith he to the believing Gentiles, *through your Mercy they alſo may obtain Mercy, i. e.* By the Grace of God ſhewed to you in the Converſion of ſo many of you, they might be ſtirr'd with a holy Indignation at themſelves, ſeeing the advantage you have gotten of them who did once ſo far exceed and ſo much deſpiſe you, to embrace Chriſt and his Goſpel, and recover their dear, but now loſt Privileges again. And if by

Acts 13. 46.

Rom. 11. 11, 12. v. 15. v. 30. v. 11. v. 14. v. 31.

theſe

theſe or any other means they are but wrought on at length, then,

6. *and Laſtly*, When ſuch do return, of all Sinners they are the moſt readily and the moſt kindly received by God. For of *all the pieces of Silver* that were loſt in the Duſt and Rubbiſh of this World, God is moſt pleaſed when thoſe are *found* again that had his *Superſcription* upon them of old, after they have been miſſing for a long while.

The Apoſtle ſpeaking of the calling of the Gentiles, that were formerly ſtrangers to the Promiſes and the future Converſion of the rejected Jews, once the Children of the Covenant, *If* (ſaith he) *thou wert cut out of the Olive Tree which is wild by Nature, and wert graffed contrary to Nature into a good Olive Tree, HOW MUCH MORE ſhall the natural Branches be graffed in again?* i. e. upon their ſincere return unto God, and Faith unfeigned in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

Rom. 11. 24.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The forementionʼd Privileges will not avail the wicked Posterity of Holy Men. The Covenant Promises have a double Condition; this sadly broken. God hath not promisʼd absolutely such effectual Grace as infallibly to prevent it. Hereupon God is at perfect liberty to reject them if he please, without any just Reflection. He doth so as to many of ʼem. They deserve and shall meet with the sorest Condemnation.

IN the former Chapter I have largely shewn the very valuable Privilege of being descended from Holy Parents, and that such as are so, stand fairest upon many accounts of all Men for Spiritual and Eternal Blessings. What I have there said on that Argument may fill them all with Hopes; what I am now entring upon may fill them with Fears, *viz.* That all these Privileges will in the issue be of no advantage to them, nor save them from Hell, if when they grow up, they prove workers of Iniquity. I will open this in Six Propositions.

I. The promise of being a God to the Seed of his People (and so all others of that nature) hath a double Condition annexed to it. I.

1. On the part of the Parents during the Minority of their Children,

2. On the Children's parts when they grow up to Maturity.

1. On the Parent's part during the Minority of their Children. No Parent now can pretend to a better tenure than our Father *Abraham* had, to whom the original Grant was made. Now saith God expressly concerning him, *I know Abraham, that he will command his Children and his Houshould after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham the thing which he hath spoken of him.* Wherein 'tis necessary implied, that if *Abraham* did not so do, God would not hold himself obliged to make good his part of the Covenant. And by his commanding of them by a Synechdoche, we are to understand all the Branches of a holy Education, *viz.* Instruction, Exhortation, Prayer, good Example, and godly Discipline. And when the Parent hath thus conscientiously discharged his Duty, there is a Condition.

Gen. 18 19.

2. On the Children's part when they are grown up to Maturity. And that is personally to lay hold on the Covenant, consent to the Terms, and walk according to the Tenor of it. For when we are Adult, our Infant-title ceases, unless it be

be this way continued. Our Parents Will ſhall no longer go for OURS, when we have the uſe of our Judgments and Wills, and are capable of a perſonal Tranſaction with God for our ſelves, if we do not ſurrender and give up our ſelves to him, upon his putting in his claim to us. If we will not do ſo, we turn Apoſtates; we do in effect abjure and renounce the God of our Fathers, we do reverſe that Dedication which they made of us, and by the courſe of our Lives and Actions ſay, that now we are come to years, and are capable of judging what they did, we think they did not do well when they devoted us to God in our Infancy as far as it was in their power: for we will not be for him, but for another. And ſo we cut our ſelves off from God, to whom they gave us; we upon deliberation caſt our ſelves out of the Covenant by our own Act and Deed whereinto they entred us, and forfeit all the Bleſſings and Privileges of it.

Our Parents own Right and Title to the Promiſe is continued to them upon this Condition, as it was to *Abraham*, provided they *walk before God and be perfect*; otherwiſe he will not continue to be their God. And when we are come to years of Diſcretion to chooſe for our ſelves, we can't reaſonably expect he

ſhould continue to be our God, but upon the ſame Terms. We can't rationally think to have a better Tenure than they under whom we hold. Tenants at ſecond hand can't hope for better Terms, than the original ones under whom they claim. 'Tis enough that when we come to write Men, we be as our Parents. *David* ſure underſtood the Terms of this great Covenant, which was in his dying Hour *all his deſire and all his Salvation*: And he expreſly tells *Solomon*, *If thou forſake the God of thy Fathers, he will caſt thee off for ever.*

II. II. This double Condition is notoriouſly broken by Multitudes. And

1. The Condition on the Parents part is ſo during the Minority of their Children.

How little care do the generality of them take to ſeaſon the Hearts of their Children with a ſaving Knowledge in their tender Years? Many Families even in this our *Goſhen* that would be accounted religious ones, are like the Houſes of the Egyptians, covered with blackneſs of darkneſs, and a palpable Ignorance in the things of God, wherein not only their Firſt-born, but all their other Children too lye dead in a ſpiritual Senſe. Where are the Men that command their Children to keep the way of the Lord, and in that reſpect

reſpect tread in the Steps of their Father *Abraham*; that give a Charge to their Children to this purpoſe, both living and dying? Where are the daily Counſels, Admonitions, Inſtructions and Exhortations, which God expects you ſhould give them when you riſe up and when you lye down, in the Houſe and in the Field? What between a negligent Father on the one hand, and a fond fooliſh Mother on the other hand, godly Family Diſcipline is almoſt loſt. Men content themſelves with a few formal lazy Prayers for them (and I doubt that is more than many of them do too) or with putting up a few Bills to deſire the Prayers of the Congregation for them; but in the mean time a holy Education of them is wofully neglected in ſome one conſiderable Branch of it, or it may be in all. And when they themſelves have Murdered their own Children, they bring them to the Prophets of the Lord to pray them to Life again. 'Tis here as in the Paſchal Solemnity of old, the Blood of theſe Lambs of Chriſt's Flock is ſprinkled, not on the Poſts of their Doors, but on the Skirts of the Garments of theſe unnatural Parents in whoſe Houſes they dwell. But I doubt it will not prove the Lord's Paſs-over to them; God awaken them, that the deſtroying Angel do not enter in there and ſlay the wicked

Authors of so great a Mischief. And as the Parents are grosly faulty, so

2*dly*, The other Condition on the Children's part, when they are grown up to Maturity, is manifestly broken by multitudes of them. For the proof of this I appeal to the Tears and the Groans of many Holy Parents over their Sons of *Belial*; who may well invert the Proverb of old, and say, *Our Children have eaten sower Grapes, and the Teeth of us their Parents are set on edge.* 'Tis but too plain that thousands of the Children of the Covenant have made themselves the Children of the Devil, for his Works they do, and that openly too. They are like their Father in other things, only they are not as invisible as he is. And tho' I hope they are not so numerous, yet I am sure their Name is *Legion*,

III. III. God hath no where absolutely promised to bestow such a measure of Grace either on Parents or Children, as infallibly to prevent the breach of either of these Conditions. This I am sure of, because if he had, he would certainly give it; for he is faithful and cannot break his word. The heart of a godly Parent may be right as to the main, and yet he may bee too negligent in this part of his Duty; and tho' in time he may reform, it may be too late before he doth it to prevent

or

or retrieve the Miſchiefs he hath done hereby to the Soul of his Child. This fatal Negligence of his that draws ſuch a black Train of ſad Conſequencies after it, is not through any defect on God's part, but purely on his own: Not for want of ſufficient Grace to diſcharge this part of his Duty, but of a diligent uſe and improvement of it. And if Men will not ſtir up the Grace of God that is in them, they can't charge God with a breach of any Promiſe he hath made to their Poſterity; nor juſtly blame him if he be as careleſs of them as they are; for they don't do what he hath commanded them, as a means on their part for the entailing Covenant-bleſſings upon them. When they grow up they depart from the good old way inſtead of walking in it. But what's the Reaſon? They did not train them up in it while they were Children, and direct their ſteps into it, tho' God engaged to beſtow Grace on them on no other terms than theſe; and tho' this was no more than what they had a power and and ability thro' Grace to do; and were often call'd on by his Word, Spirit, Providence and Miniſters ſo to do, yet they would not. Is God now to be blamed for this? No ſurely. For tho' he hath ſaid, he will Circumciſe the Heart of his Servants and their Seed after them; yet he

Deut. 30. 6, 10. he expressly requires, *that they hearken to the Voice of the Lord, and keep his Commandments, and turn to the Lord their God with all their Heart and with all their Soul.*—— Hence it follows,

IV. IV. That God is at perfect liberty to reject and cast them off if he please. For this is the nature of all Covenants, that when one Party doth not perform, but notoriously break the Condition which he stood engaged to, the other Party is discharged, and if he please, may, without any just Reflection, refuse to do what upon that supposition only he obliged himself unto. And surely we will allow to God, what we so reasonably claim to our selves; *i. e.* to speak in a Modern Phrase, to *abdicate* them that wilfully *break the Original Contract*, and especially if they obstinately persist in so doing. * He can't be charg'd with *Injustice*; for 'tis a righteous thing in him to reject those that in such a manner first of all reject him: Nor with want of *Truth* and *Faithfulness* to his Word; for 'tis but the doing what in such cases he hath told and threatned that he would do. 'Tis only Divine Goodness that can be called in Question.

* Remarkable to this purpose are the Words of *Metellus*, *Dii immortales plurimum possunt; sed non plus nobis velle debent quam Parentes. At Parentes, si perginus errare, suis bonis nos exhæredant. Quid ergo nos a Dijs immortalibus divinitus expectemus, nisi ærationibus finem faciamus? His demum Deos propitios esse æquum est qui sibi adversarij non sunt. A. Gellij noct. Attic. l. 1. c. 6* It

It would be too great a Diverſion to ſhew that this Attribute doth not oblige God to beſtow ſpecial, effectual, ſaving Grace on this or that Man. For *de facto*, 'tis evident he doth not do it to Multitudes. He never deſign'd to repreſent himſelf either in his Word, or his Actions as a Being of meer Grace and Mercy. Divine Goodneſs, as to its Actings, is under the regulation and conduct of his other Attributes, of Juſtice, Holineſs, and Wiſdom; and 'tis for the honour of God that it ſhould be ſo. He is to be conceived by us not only under the Notion of a very gracious *Benefactor*, but alſo under that of a Wiſe, Righteous, Soveraign *Ruler* over *Rational Beings*; whom he governs according to their *Natures*. The Former Notion renders it infinitely decorous for him beſtow effectual Saving Grace on ſome, even tho' they have forfeited it and rendred themſelves utterly unworthy of it; that he may have ſome everlaſting Monuments of the Riches of his free Love, and ſome to be a peculiar People to himſelf, actively glorifying, loving, ſerving of him, and deſignedly promoting his Honour and Intereſt here below in their ſeveral Generations: That he may have ſome dutiful loyal Subjects, and his Son may have a Seed to ſerve him as a Recompence for his bitter Sufferings. For the honour of the

the divine Name and Government. But then 'tis fit he ſhould uſe his own Liberty, and ſhew his Mercy on whom he will; it being ſuch a marvelous Inſtance of Bounty as none can juſtly claim, and all have a thouſand ways and times rendered themſelves utterly undeſerving of it.

But then conſider God as a Wiſe, Righteous, Soveraign *Ruler* over Rational Beings, whom he govers according to their Natures as Free-Agents, ſo 'tis infinitely decent and becoming of him to uſe ſuch Providences, Helps, Means internal and external, the calls of his Word, Motions of his Spirit, checks and rebukes of their own Conſciences, *&c.* as have a viſible aptitude in them to make powerful Impreſſions upon Creatures of ſuch a Make and Frame, and lead them to Repentance; and then refer it to their *own choice.* But if they will from time to time wickedly, and obſtinately, and madly reſiſt the natural, and the mighty force and tendency of theſe proper Means, their own Conſciences, and all impartial ſtanders by will highly juſtifie God, that he would have purged and ſaved them, did what lay on him, and what was meet and fit for him to do in order thereunto: But after all they *would* madly undo themſelves in deſpite of him.

Here

Here was all the goodneſs of a *Governour* ſhewn to them, and that in very high degrees and repeated Inſtances of it: Yea, even the goodneſs of a *gracious Benefactor* too, in very great meaſures, tho' not in that particular height as to beſtow effectual Grace upon them, which he was no ways obliged unto; nay, rather was obliged to *deny* it to the *generality* of ſuch Creatures, tho' for the fore-mentioned Reaſons he did give it to ſome few of their number. For as a Rector he is concerned at length, *generally ſpeaking*, to withdraw preſent and deny further Favors to thoſe that have ſo *inſufferably* abuſed them, and recompence them according to their Works.

And of all the Men in the World Divine Goodneſs is leaſt of all to be Impeached for denying ſaving effectual Grace to the profligate Children of Holy Men, to whom he hath vouchſafed ſuch peculiar Privileges, mentioned at large in the foregoing Chapter, above what are commonly granted to others; and who yet do ſo horribly affront and provoke him, *reject the Counſel of God againſt themſelves*, and of all the Sons of Men render and judge themſelves moſt unworthy of any other Inſtances of the Divine Grace and Bounty. Hereupon,

5. God

V. V. God doth reject and disown them with the greatest Indignation and Scorn. He will not do them so much Honour as to look upon them as related to, or descended from such holy Men. *Not they that are the Children of the Flesh*, i. e. Rom. 9. 8. those that are only so, *but the Children of the Promise are counted for the Seed.* As tho' the ungodly Israelites were none of *Abraham*'s Posterity. Such are to him as the Children of the Heathens, yea and those Amos 9. 7. the vilest of Heathens too. *Ye are all to me as the Children of the Ethiopians, O Children of Israel*; or as the *Arabians*, as some Learned Men think the word signifies: A base and thievish, a bloody and savage People, cursed of old in their Progenitors by *Noah*, hated, and despised, and abhorred of all their Neighbours, as the very dregs and scum of Mankind. Nay, yet worse, God compares them to the people of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*. Such filthy Wretches which God's Soul did so loath and abominate, that he rained down Fire and Brimstone from Heaven upon Isa. 1. 10. them. *Hear the word of the Lord ye Rulers of Sodom, and ye people of Gomorrah*: They are the wicked Posterity of *Abraham* that are there spoken to. And when we are arrived at *Sodom*, we are on the very brink of Hell; and thence doth Christ fetch the Parentage of the wicked Jews: *You*

say

ſay you have Abraham to your Father; but I ſay you are of your Father the Devil, for his works you do. John 8.

Now from all that hath been ſaid it follows,

VI. Laſtly, That ſo far are the wicked Children of Holy Parents from being ſaved becauſe of their Relation to them, that they ſhall receive a ſorer Condemnation than the Children of others. And very good reaſon there is for it. For they ſin againſt all the fore-mention'd various Means, Helps, and Advantages which they enjoy above others. VI.

God is more diſhonoured by them. They tempt Men to think there's no great matter in being viſibly in Covenant with God. They harden Men in their miſtaken Belief, that our Doctrine of Infants Church Memberſhip is the Foundation of, and an Inlet into Ignorance, Looſeneſs and Profaneſs.

They are greater Scandals to the Men of this World; and a greater Comfort and Encouragement to them in their evil ways.

They contradict the great End and Deſign of God, who expects to have his Church and his Intereſt upheld and propagated by thoſe that are Born to him, and bred up for him in Religious Families.

When

When they prove bad, they are generally the vileſt of Men, and therefore ſhall prove the moſt forlorn miſerable Creatures in Eternal Torments.

CHAP. III.

An Addreſs propoſed to be made to Three ſorts of Perſons. Two of them, viz. Miniſters, young ones eſpecially, of Holy Parents, applied to in this Chapter.

FROM what hath been ſaid in the two foregoing Chapters, I ſhall take an occaſion to addreſs my ſelf to three ſorts of Perſons.

I. I. To Miniſters.
II. II. To Holy Parents.
III. III. To the Children of ſuch.

I. To Miniſters. And I beſeech them to ſuffer the word of Exhortation from one that is more conſcious to himſelf, than any other can be of his great unfitneſs in all reſpects to be their Monitor.

But a Pipe, tho' made of a very ordinary piece of Wood, or a Trumpet, tho' a very plain and common one, and a thing without Life, may ſerve to raiſe the Spirits of a skillful and valiant Soldier, and quicken

quicken him to the Battle. The thing that I would humbly ſtir you up unto by way of remembrance, ſpeaks it ſelf, how little ſoever I may be capable of ſaying to it. For 'tis to be imitators of God, and like him to have a ſpecial Eye upon and peculiar regard unto the Children of the Covenant in general, and particularly thoſe of them that are the Off-ſpring of the Members of thoſe ſeveral Churches of Chriſt wherein the Holy Ghoſt hath already ſettled any of you, or ſhall do ſo for the future.

This ſeems to me to be the peculiar Province wherein young Miniſters are moſt likely to ſerve their Maſter and their Generation. For as for the old Grey-headed Sinners they will be too apt to diſpiſe your Youth. Your Arms are too feeble to make the Sword of the Spirit pierce thro' the thick Scales of the over-grown Leviathans. Theſe bones are not only dead, but have been ſo for ſo long a time that they are even dry too. And is it likely you ſhould Prophecy ſo as to make them live? But yet *Abba Father*, all things are poſſible unto thee.

As for the aged Believers, the main Work was done on them many years, it may be, ere you were born: They were in Chriſt a long time before you were in the World. They whoſe Grey Hairs in the

the way of righteouſneſs, make them look like Ears of Corn ripe for the Harveſt, and even ready to be carried into the Garner, need little cultivating or watering from any Hand.

As for the Children of ungodly Men, you ſeldom converſe with them; and when you do, they will hardly give you the hearing when you offer to ſpeak ſeriouſly to them of the things of God. Theſe are a Generation of Vipers, and will be ready to hiſs and ſting that charitable Hand that doth but touch them, tho' never ſo gently. Or if you do make any impreſſions upon them, they are quickly ſtifled and blotted out again by the Agents of Satan, among whom they live and converſe withal.

But as for thoſe young ones that dwell under the Roof of a holy *Abraham*, and ſprang from his Loins, you have more opportunities of dealing with them, and more hopes of prevailing upon them. They are more ſoft and yielding, more capable of and likely to receive *impreſſions* from your hands, here therefore may you moſt rationally expect ſome Seals of your Miniſtry. You have in them ſome little handle to take hold of, ſome imperfect knowledge of the Principles of the Oracles of God, which their Parents have been dropping into them; and ſome good af-

affections which the Spirit ſometimes ſtirs up in them; like a few ſtreaks of Light in the Air before the riſing of the Sun, the happy preſages of a fair day. You have ſome little ſhare in their affections and eſteem; they have learnt from their Parents to ſhew ſome reſpect even to the meaneſt of Chriſt's Embaſſadors. There are many little Arts whereby you may eaſily ſlide and wind and inſinuate your ſelves into their Affections for their good, and get within 'em. They will be apt it may be to ſpeak more freely to you, when the gravity of an aged Miniſter will damp and over-awe them. Poſſibly they may more readily hearken to you, when you ſpeak againſt youthful Luſts, than they would to elder perſons; who they may be apt to think do talk againſt them becauſe their Age hath mortified them, and made them at once uncapable of remembring the former pleaſures of Senſe, as well as of taſting them for the future. The Wiſdom of God appears in commiſſionating not only Angels to preach the Goſpel to us, but Men like our ſelves, ſubject to the like Paſſions and Infirmities as we are. And if any little beginnings of a good Work appear as the Fruit of what you ſay to them, their holy Parents under whoſe Wings they are, will be ready to cheriſh he vital heat that you

have imparted to them; with joyful Hearts will take up the matter where you left it, and carry it on.

'Tis evidently the grand design of the Devil and his Instruments, and which God especially calls you to countermine, to seduce and debauch these. The roaring Lyon that goes about seeking whom to devour, longs for the young Kids and the tender *Lambs* of Christ's Flock as the sweetest Prey that he can fasten upon. God quicken you, and prosper your Endeavours to pluck them out of his Jaw who is swallowing them at this day with open Mouth. Notwithstanding all their Privileges, they will as certainly and more fatally perish than the Children of other Men if an especial care be not taken of them. And where will you employ your selves, if not among these young and tender Plants, in those Houses that are the *Nurseries* of the Church, whence there is the greatest likelyhood of a supply of fit Members for the Plantations of Christ, when the old Trees are removed? *Our Fathers where are they? Where?* praising God in Heaven, and their places on Earth shall know them no more. Our ancient Disciples are marching apace after them, wearing away and dropping off one after another. And where, in a few years, shall Christ have a Generation to serve

him

him, if you do not from among these raise up a spiritual Seed to our Elder Brother. If we have not some new ones to come up in their room (and whence can they be so reasonably expected as from such Families?) If our *Burials* exceed the number of our *Births*, we cannot long subsist; but the Churches of Christ which he hath set you to look after, must sink, and in a little while come to nothing.

II. I shall apply my self to Holy Parents, a little to direct and perswade them to take a special care of the Souls of their Children. And, II.

I. Begin betimes, and continue unwearied in a godly Education of them in all the Branches of it, using all means and helps to make it successful. Study their Tempers and Inclinations, that you may the better manage them. Keep them duly to Family Prayer, and put them upon seeking God apart by themselves. Bring them to the Publick Worship as soon as may be without disturbance to the Assembly. Examine them what they remember of every Sermon they hear, and let them know you expect an account. When any affecting Passages drop from the Mouth of the Preacher, whet them upon their Minds, and make a particular Application of them to their Souls; This, O my Child, is thy Duty and Danger as well I.

as mine; my eternal Salvation and thine depend on the doing what we have heard this day. Keep them, O keep them from *Evil Company*, infectious *Books*, and places of Temptation and Danger. Maintain your *Authory* over them, and yet don't deal imperiouſly with them, *provoking them to wrath.*

But eſpecially let me recommend two Branches of a Holy Education, which I doubt are much neglected, or at leaſt not performed aright.

1. The exerciſe of a ſtrict Family Diſcipline in a prudent and pious manner. Indeed it looks like a piece of *Popiſh Penance* for a Man to Correct his own Child; 'tis to laſh *himſelf*, and ſcourge his *own Fleſh*. But remember the expreſs Command of God, *Chaſten thy Son while there is hope, and let not thy Soul ſpare for his crying.* 'Tis better they ſhould cry a little under your Rod, than roar for want of it for ever in Hell, and be laſht with Scorpions there to Eternity. Only let this be done prudently, ſeaſonably, calmly, ſoberly, convincing them firſt of their Fault, and your neceſſary Duty in chaſtiſing of them by ſome pertinent Scripture, and with Solemn Prayer either before or after, or both, that God would Sanctifie it as his own Ordinance to the good of their Souls.

2. Cate-

2. Chatechize and inſtruct them duly both as to Matter and Manner.

As to *Matter*. See that the foundation of Chriſtianity be well inlaid in their Souls.

For 'tis a lewd Age, wherein many whoſe own Souls are canker'd with Principles of *Atheiſm* and *Infidelity*, endeavour by ſlye Inſinuations gradually to taint and corrupt firſt the Minds and then the Manners of the Youth of this City. And it would make a Man's Heart bleed to think how far they have prevail'd on many of them. Tho' they are but *thin Cobwebs* that they weave, yet they have been ſtrong enough to hold many of theſe little *Inſects*: and when once they have entangled them, they never ceaſe inſtilling their Venome till they have totally poiſon'd and ruin'd them. 'Tis wonderful to obſerve how ſoon ſome of theſe Novices have ſet up for *Doctors* in the Devil's Schools, and ſeating themſelves in the *Chair of the Scorners*, can deride all revealed Religion, arraign and condemn Chriſt as an Impoſtor, and beſmear him again with their Spittle; Burleſque the Holy Scriptures, and laugh at immaterial Subſtances and everlaſting Flames. And tho' many of them evidently do not underſtand the Atheiſtical, Infidel Cavils and Objections they have heard, yet they will be *hammering* at them, and repeat ſome-

what of them, like an *Eccho* in an empty and hollow place, that reverberates the laſt words that were ſpoken, but in ſuch a broken imperfect manner that there is no Senſe to be made of them. But above all to run down the MINISTRY, is at once both the eaſieſt and the pleaſanteſt thing of all. And every *dull young Fool* fancies he can be very ſmart and witty upon them. *Balaam*'s Miracle is repeated every day; There is no *Aſs* ſo ſtupid but can open his Mouth to rebuke the *madneſs of a Prophet*. And how can the Servants of Chriſt do any good upon them, when they are deſpiſed in their Eyes; and when the very Topicks whence their Arguments of perſwaſion are drawn, are not only disbelieved but derided by 'em too.

In ſhort, Atheiſm, Ungodlineſs and Debauchery lie at the bottom of all this, and therefore eſpecially fortifie their Minds againſt them in their young and tender Years.

Moreover, give them a clear underſtanding of their *Native Corruption* wherein they were born; of the nature and neceſſity of *Regeneration* and the *influences of the Spirit* and *Repentance* towards God and *Faith* on our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which are the vital practical fundamentals of the Goſpel: The meaning of their *Baptiſm*, and the *Covenant* of God whereinto you entred

entred them: What *advantages* they have thereby; what *Obligations* and *Encouragements perſonally to lay hold on the Covenant*, and yield up themſelves unto God fully, ſincerely and deliberately; and that their Lives and their Souls, and their eternal Salvation, and their *ALL* doth depend on their ſo doing.

And then as for the *Manner* of your Inſtruction, let it be frequent, with a becoming *Gravity*, *Seriouſneſs*, and a viſible holy *warmth* of Soul; and mingle with your Teaching the moſt pathetical Exhortations, Counſels, Admonitions, Perſwaſions and Commands. Not only inform their *Judgments*, but apply your ſelves to their *Affections* too. The Miniſters of God are fain to ſtudy how to reach both theſe for the Converſion of grown perſons; and ſo muſt you as ever you hope to be happy Inſtruments in the Converſion of your Children: 'tis as neceſſary, and more eaſie to reach their Hearts. Not only ply the Oar, but fill the Sails too, or elſe theſe little Veſſels will hardly be moved up the Stream and againſt the Tide. And be ſure to add to all the reſt a holy Example; there is a Reverence due from you to your Children, as well as from them to you. Do nothing that is unſeemly before them, leaſt they learn it of you, and reſemble you more in ſuch

Actions than in any of your *Features*. Worſe *Marks* and *Signatures* are hereby made by many Parents on their Children *after* their Birth, than by ſome of them *before* it. I muſt not forget, and hope you will not neither, the offering up daily fervent Prayers to the God of all Grace in their behalf.

II. II. Follow them cloſe when at any time you perceive them under Convictions, or any good Affections ſtirring in them.

Then are you moſt likely to ſucceed, when God and you are workers together.

III. III. Have a care what Servants you take into your Houſes. Theſe will be much with them, and it will lye in their power to do them much good or harm while they are attending on them. As not only the Stars, but even the Planets that move in an inferiour Orb, have either a benign or a malignant Influence on this Earth while they are miniſtring to it.

IV. IV. Prudently make a viſible diſtinction in the diſtribution of your worldly Goods among them according to the appearances of ſerious Religion in them. When once they ſee by your Carriage towards them, that you are reſolv'd to put as few Weapons as well you can into the Hands of thoſe that are the *Devil's Children* more than *yours*, it may keep them from open wicked-

wickedneſs, bring them to a due attendance on the publick Miniſtry, make them a little thoughtful and conſidering; and who knows what the bleſſed Iſſue of that may be in time? God himſelf makes Promiſes and Threatnings about things of this nature to allure Men to Religon: The giving or denying temporal Bleſſings is one means that he makes uſe of to prevent Sin and to reclaim Men from it. 'Tis not in it ſelf the *beſt* and the *ſtrongeſt* Argument, but it may be the moſt effectual in ſome caſes and on ſome Tempers: And a wiſe Man will uſe that means which is the moſt likely to attain his End, not that which abſtractedly conſider'd is moſt noble. A wedge of *Gold* is more valuable than a great quantity of *Iron*: But a wiſe Man that is aſſaulted by his Enemy, had rather at that time have and uſe even a *ruſty old Sword*.

V. Prepare them for and bring them to a full Communion with ſome or other of the Churches of Chriſt. I ſhall toward the end of this Diſcourſe call upon them to join themſelves to ſuch Societies. I now mind you to fit and to call upon them to do it. You can't imagine what an Advantage it would be if you did but thoroughly prepare them for, and prevail upon them to come and ſolemnly and perſonally to renew their Baptiſmal Covenant V.

nant at the Table of our Lord, and put themselves under the inspection, care, prayers of such a Christian Society, and the evangelical Discipline of the Officers thereof. By Parents neglect of so doing that little good thing that was (it may be) in the Hearts of their Children towards the Lord God of *Israel*, withers and decays: They degenerate into an indifferency of Spirit, luke-warmness and carelessness about the things of God and of Religion: And all good Impressions that once were made on them, are so far worn out, that it becomes a very doubtful thing whither they have any thing at all of the Grace of God in their Hearts: Like the Inscription of an old neglected Monument, so batter'd and defac'd that 'tis scarce legible, and 'tis very difficult to pick out what and whose remains are within. To this 'tis owing that so many join themselves to no Church; content themselves with an *Attendance* on the publick Sermons only, with a general *Profession* of Christianity at large; or it may be with a bare *Morality*; and too many drop off wholly into the World, being altogether transform'd into the way and manners, and are totally lost in the Vanities and Corruptions of it: Like dead pieces of Wood, that once were parts of living Trees, falling into some Waters of a pe-

petrifying nature, that are thereupon changed into the likeneſs and hardneſs of Stones.

VI. Deal very ſeriouſly with them when your End is viſibly approaching. Let ſome of your laſt Breath be ſpent for God's Glory and the good of their Souls. Tell them your own experiences of the goodneſs and faithfulneſs of God; the advantages of an early ſerious Religion; the vanity and folly of Sin, the happineſs of an intereſt in Chriſt, and charge them as ever they expect to ſee God's Face and yours with comfort, diligently to look after it. The words of a dying Man, eſpecially of a *dying Friend or Parant*, enter deep, come with a great weight and authority, and may be remembred by them to very good purpoſes, after you your ſelves are paſs'd into the Land of forgetfulneſs. VI.

The taking a ſpecial care of the Souls of their Children in ſuch Inſtances as theſe, might be urged with variety of Motives. I will mention but one, and that is a very affecting one, *viz.* the Groans of a godly Parent over a wicked Child. And could we but get near enough, we might hear him venting his Paſſion in ſome ſuch words as theſe; *viz.* 'Oh this ungodly Wretch, 'this Son of *Belial!* He will break my 'Heart ſure, and bring down my grey Hairs

'Hairs in sorrow to the Grave. I trained 'him up for God; but he is resolved to 'be for the Devil in despight of God and 'me. When he was an Infant, I remem-'ber he was a pleasant Child: When he 'was a tender Plant, I hoped he would 'one day have flourisht like a Branch of 'Righteousness that the Lord had bless'd. 'But he is now a grieving Brier, and a 'pricking Thorn in my Eyes, my very 'Heart and Soul. Alas! Woe is me misе-'rable Man that I am; that ever Hell 'should be the fuller for me! That from 'my Loins should issue one that is a dis-'honour to God, and a scandal to Reli-'gion, the plague and burden of the 'Earth, and a Fire-brand for eternal 'Burnings. O my Bowels, my Bowels! 'I am pained at the very Heart. Now is 'my Soul exceeding sorrowful even unto 'death. Happy is the Womb that never 'bare, and the Breasts that never gave 'suck. Would to God I had been writ-'ten down Childless in his Book. Was 'ever any sorrow like ———

And then the swelling Passion grows too big to be vented by Words: a Floud of Tears gushing out stops the good Man's Speech; and he expresses (as the *Egyptians* in their Hieroglyphicks did, by things not by words) the remainders of his grief in sighs and deep groans, enough to

to break his own Heart, and the Heart of any Man that doth but hear him.

How ſad would it be if this ſhould be your caſe another day; and how heavy would it lye upon you if your own Conſcience ſhould reproach you, All this hath come to paſs thro' your own fondneſs, neglect and folly?

CHAP. IV.

An Addreſs to the Children of Holy Men in Five Things.

MY Diſcourſe in this Chapter ſhall, like the Divine Bleſſing, deſcend from Holy Parents to their Children. And there are theſe Five Things I ſhall propoſe to them.

I. Seriouſly bethink your ſelves. Conſider each of you in particular in how many Inſtances you have broken with God, and (from what hath been ſaid in the fore-going Chapters) the greatneſs of your guilt and danger in ſo doing. What degenerate Wretches have you been to ſtrike in with the avowed Enemy of your Father's Houſe, and ſo ſtain the Honour and Glory of it? How often is it mention'd in Scripture as a mighty aggravation of Mens ſins, that they forſook the God

God of their Fathers? And this thou hast done. Is not the Voice of Reason as well as Scripture, *Thy own Friend, and thy Father's Friend forsake thou not*? God took you into his Family before you were capable of doing him any Service; and since you have been capable of it, you have rebelled against him that was your God from your Mother's Womb, and that sustain'd you in the Arms of his merciful Providence when you hung upon your Mother's Breasts. Be astonisht O Heavens, and tremble O Earth! the Lord hath nourisht and brought up Children, and they have lifted up their Heels against him. You have been as a Beast before him; yea more brutish than any of them. For the Ox knows his Owner, and the Ass is not so dull but he knows his Master's Crib. What Iniquity have you found in the God of your Fathers? Testifie against him if you are able. Hath he been a dry Land or a barren Wilderness to you? For which of his good Works have you dealt thus with him? And for what? For the sake of lying and destructive Vanities, of which you have cause to be ashamed, and dread what the issue of them may be. Know thou that for all these things God will speedily bring thee to Judgment. And do but suppose him speaking to you in some such words as these. You

Prov. 27. 10.

'You are the Seed of my ancient 'Friends; and you ſhould have ſavour'd 'of the Stock whence you ſprang. For 'your Father's ſake I gave you many of 'the Bleſſings of my Left Hand; and I 'reached out my Right Hand too to em-'brace you; but you rudely put it by, 'and madly flung away from me: In 'your Infancy I entred into Covenant 'with you and ſware to you: I took you 'into my Houſe and ſet my Seal upon you. 'I gave you many helps which others 'never enjoy'd; and freed you from ma-'ny hinderances that others were ham-'per'd withal. I well remember the Care, 'the Commands, the Prayers, the Tears, 'the Pains which yonder Parents of yours 'took about you; and I declare before 'all the World, that I take it kindly at 'their Hands. They did the duty of a 'Father and a Mother to you. And I 'was not wanting to you neither. I be-'gun, as you can't but remember, very 'early with you; I waited long upon 'you; I follow'd you Year after Year 'with Offers and Entreaties. I water'd 'you with the Dew of Heaven till I was 'quite weary of you, for you ſtill proved 'dead Trees. I expected you ſhould have 'been a Diadem and a Crown of Glory 'to me, a credit to Religion, an honour 'and a comfort to your Parents, and have

'pro-

'promoted my Intereſt in the Earth. But 'on the contrary, you have been a blot 'and a reproach to me, a ſcandal to the 'Men of the World, a comfort to the 'Children of wicked Men, by ſhewing 'them there were ſome that could be vi'er 'than the vileſt of them; a ſhame and a 'grief to the Souls of your Parents. You 'did eat out the Mark that I ſo early ſet 'upon you, that when your Fleeces were 'a little grown, it was not diſcernable; 'as tho' you deſign'd that my Servants 'when they ſought you out might not 'know you, or ſo much as ſuſpect that 'ever you belong'd to my Fold. I put 'you to feed in green Paſtures, by the 'ſtill Waters among my Sheep; and you 'were not ſtoln out of my Grounds, but 'you your ſelves *run aſtray*, broke thro' 'my Encloſures, leapt over my Hedge, 'tho' you knew it was a very high and 'thorny one, and the Briers thereof did 'often run into your Fleſh. And now 'therefore, O ye Angels, the Executioners 'of my Vengeance, bind theſe up in Bun'dles, for they are the Tares that grew 'in my Field among my good Corn, and 'throw them into unquenchable Flames. 'Of all Sinners, I am reſolved theſe ſhall 'never ſee my Face.

Lord,

Lord, what fear, what ſhame, what bluſhes, what confuſion, what agonies of Mind, and horrors of Conſcience will ſeize you when God ſhall thus ſpeak to you out of the Whirl-wind of his Wrath, with a Voice lowder and more terrible than Thunder! There will be weeping and howling in that day among all the workers of Iniquity; but among none ſo great and ſo loud as among the Children of the Kingdom when they ſhall be thruſt out, and plung'd into the fiery ſulphurious Lake; when at the ſame time they that were Strangers, and in a double Senſe took Heaven by violence, ſhall in their very ſight, and before their Faces, enter into the Kingdom with *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*. What gnaſhing of Teeth will there be among you for madneſs *before* you ſink into that doleful place, as well as for exceſſive torment *after* you are in in it to ſee your ſelves excluded and them admitted. Then ſhall the fulleſt Vials of Wrath be poured out on your Heads: And if you will not *now*, you ſhall *then*, lay to Heart ſuch things as theſe throughout the vaſt and endleſs ages of Eternity, and your own Conſciences and Thoughts ſhall be perpetually falling upon you like a freſh Milſtone, or talent of Lead, dropt upon your Heads every Moment.

Oh that you were wiſe, and underſtood this before it be too late! Shew your ſelves Men, and prevent all this by a preſent ſerious Conſideration while things may be helpt. And if you would but take this firſt Step you would not need much perſwaſion to take the

II. II. *Viz.* Earneſtly plead the Covenant of God with your Fathers for his pardoning and renewing Grace. Alas! it may be, ſome of you will ſay, God help us, this Advice comes too late to us. For we have many Years neglected the ratification of it ſince we have been at Age, and ſo the time is ſlip'd and elaps'd. Nay, which is yet worſe, we have notoriouſly broken it; forfeited all our Intereſt in it, and can't rationally expect any benefit by it; but rather on the contrary, that God ſhould deal worſe with us than with others that have been ſtrangers to the Covenant and the Promiſes.

A very deep and ſerious Senſe of this would do well. But be it ſo; This is an Argument indeed that you ſhould plead this Covenant with a great deal of Humility and godly ſorrow, but 'tis no Argument that you ſhould not plead it at all. For if now at laſt you are but ſerious and in earneſt, you have a gracious God to deal with, who is ready to renew his Cove-

Covenant with you, and you may yet apply your ſelves to him with a greater confidence than the Children of others can rationally do, under all your ſinking fears on the account of the great guilt you have contracted, the great danger you have incurr'd, and the diſmal wrath you have deſerv'd. For after all, you have more to ſay for your ſelves than the Children of Strangers have; for you may apply your ſelves to him under ſuch a Notion as they cannot, as *your Father's God*, as many have done under the like fears and diſtreſſes of Conſcience, and found relief by it. God was juſt on the very point of rooting up the whole Nation of *Iſrael* at once; and of the two Arguments that *Moſes* urges God withal to ſpare them, tho' a provoking People, this, as the ſtrongeſt, is put laſt, *Remember Iſaac and Iſrael thy Servants, from whom they are deſcended.* And this made his Repentings to kindle faſter towards them, than ever his Anger did againſt them. What a prodigious Sinner was *Manaſſeh*? And yet when in his great Affliction he *beſought the Lord his God, and humbled himſelf greatly before the God of his Fathers, he was entreated of him.* *Exod.* 32. 13. 2 *Chron.* 33. 12.

You have played the Harlot, ſaith God to the Jews, *with many Lovers.* And tho' *Jer.* 3. 1.

in that case Men would give an everlasting Bill of Divorce, *yet return unto me,*
v. 4. *saith the Lord.* And *wilt thou not from this time cry to me my Father, thou art the guide of my youth?* Will you not at last return unto me, who have been so early espoused to you, and stood in a Covenant-relation to your Ancestors when they were but a small handful of People,
Ezek. 16. 22. as the words *thy youth* are explained else-where. And then you have the Answer which God himself, by way of Prophesie and Encouragement, frames for them, *Behold we come unto thee, the Lord our God. q. d.* We are the Posterity of thine ancient Servants, by Birth related to thee, and that encourages us to come to thee as the Lord our God, tho' we are unworthy to be called thy People. Special Mercies in a time of great discouragements are promised to them, *because ye are,*
Isa. 41. 8. saith God, *the seed of Abraham my Friend.* And when they were not only under sore distresses, but sad declinings too, they had *erred* from God's ways, and their Hearts were *hardened* from his Fear; they plead this Argument with God for seasonable Relief, *We are thine; thou never*
Isa. 63. 19. *beareſt Rule over them, they were not called by thy Name.*

Take

Take therefore to your ſelves words, and ſay, 'Lord wilt thou not ſhow ſpe-'cial favour to us, ſeeing thou haſt been 'an ancient Friend to, and Confederate 'with our Family? Why, this is an Ar-'gument that is wont to prevail upon '*Men*, even thoſe that are ill-natur'd, 'whoſe Bowels are but Flints and Ada-'mants in compariſon of thy tender Com-'paſſions. And 'tis a *vertuous* Diſpoſition, 'a thing commendable and praiſe-worthy 'in the Judgment of all: And as ſuch 'tis 'recorded in thy Book in ſundry Inſtances. '*Tis ſo of David, that he enquired whi-* 2 *Sam.* 9. *ther there were any of the houſe of Saul yet* 3, 7. *alive, that he might ſhew the kindneſs of God to him*, 'and he ſhewed very conſi-'derable reſpect to *Mepheboſheth* for *Jona-'than* his *Father*'s ſake, becauſe of the 'ſtrict league of Friendſhip that had been 'between them. *Aſa* prevailed on *Ben-'hadad*, tho a very wicked and ſelfiſh 'Man, to joyn with him in his diſtreſs, 'becauſe there hath been, ſaid he, *a League between thy Father and my Father.* 'And 'tis mention'd as a Reproach to '*Joaſh*, that *he remembred not the kindneſs* 2 *Chron.* *that Jehoiada the Father had done, but* 24. 22. *ſlew his Son.* 'And ſhall the ſame thing 'be charg'd on thee? Far be this from 'thee, O Lord. True, indeed, I have

'neglected thy Covenant, and ſadly bro-
'ken it. But yet thou haſt ſaid to the
'Children of the Covenant, *Return ye back-ſliding Children. Behold, I return unto thee, heal all my back-ſlidings, for thou art the Lord my God; my God from my Mother's Belly: Save me for I am the Son of thine Hand-maid,* 'And if thou art
'aſhamed to be known by the Name of
'MY God; yet, O Lord God of my
'FATHERS and thy *Friends*, look upon
'me, and be gracious unto me, as thou
'uſeſt to be to the returning Poſterity of
'them that loved and feared thy Name.

III. III. Plead your Holy Baptizm, and the many Promiſes of God to the Children of holy Men.

'Lord, my Parents have ſolemnly dedi-
'cated me to thee in my Infancy. See
'whoſe Character and Superſcription it is
'that I bear upon me. O help a poor
'Creature that is willing *to render unto*
'*God* the *things that are Gods*. Save me,
'for I am thine, and let not one of thy
'own periſh eternally for want of thy
'help. For haſt thou not ſaid, *I will be a God to my People and their Seed?* That thou wilt *Circumciſe their Heart, and the Heart of their Seed after them?* That thou wilt *pour out thy Bleſſing on their Off-ſpring?* 'True indeed, theſe are but gene-
'ral

'ral indefinite Promiſes. I can't ſay thou 'hadſt a ſpecial Eye upon me in particu-'lar, infallibly to make all this good to 'me. But then on the other hand, I 'can't ſay the contrary. Nay, I have 'good hopes thro' Grace, that I was par-'ticularly intended by thee, becauſe thou 'haſt put it into the Heart of thy Servant 'to pray this Prayer before thee this day. 'Thou uſeſt to be found of thoſe that 'ſeek thee. They that hunger and thirſt 'after ſpiritual good things, are not wont 'to be ſent empty away, but to be libe-'rally filled. O let my Fleece alſo be 'wet with the Dew of Heaven. If thou 'haſt no regard to me *a dead Dog*, yet 'have ſome reſpect to that word of thine 'wherein thou haſt made me to hope. 'Let Heaven ſay *Amen* to the Requeſts, 'which if I know my ſelf, in the ſincerity 'of my own Heart, I offer up here on 'Earth.

IV. Add hereunto a perſonal ſolemn Dedication, and ſurrender of your ſelves to God as his Covenant-Servants with your whole Heart and Soul. Nothing of reaſon can be urged againſt this; a great deal of reaſon may be urged for it. Being now come to years of underſtanding, you are capable of ſuch a Tranſaction. Your Parents dedication of you will paſs IV.

for nothing, if you don't ratifie and confirm it by your own Act and Deed. God by theſe Papers at this time puts in his claim to you. If you don't comply, he may take it for a flat denial. Have you not manifeſtly broken Covenant with him; and is it not high time to renew it? How expreſs, punctual, and ſerious are you in all your Contracts with Men in Matters of an infinitely lower nature and concern? And why ſhould you not be the ſame when you are to tranſact with the great God, and give up your ſelves Body and Soul to be his for ever? Such a Covenanting with God would ſtrike a mighty awe into your Breaſts; fix your volatile Spirits; leave a grateful reliſh and ſavour on your Souls; comfort you under fears, help to clear up your doubts; check you when you begin to wander; recover you when you are fallen, if reflected on; quicken you to the diſcharge of your duty; fortifie you againſt temptations; the making and the keeping of of it will be life to you in the hour of death. When a Man is brought to this in ſincerity, this is ſaving Converſion; and ſomewhat of this will follow upon that great Change. If there be indeed any thing of the renewing Grace of God within you, that will naturally incline you

you to it, and there will not need much perſwaſion. The divine Flame in any Soul will of it ſelf point upward, and its natural tendency is toward that Heaven from whence it came. O that the Divine Spirit would breathe upon you; then would you readily ſay, 'Lord, I here 'return to thee a poor wandring Crea-'ture, even my own Soul: I reſtore to 'thee that which I have robbed thee off. 'Now in the Name of thy Son, and by 'the Spirit of thy Grace, I yield up my 'ſelf to thee, to be thine, to be ruled as 'well as to be ſaved by thee.

V. Laſtly, having done all this, join your ſelves as Members to ſome particular Church of Chriſt or other. For the better edification of his Body, our Saviour hath appointed the erecting of particular *Churches*: And wherever a ſufficient number of perſons were called, it was the conſtant practice of the primitive times to unite in ſuch Societies as ſtated Members of them, under the guidance and conduct of thoſe Paſtors and Teachers, which with their own conſent, the Holy Ghoſt had ſet over them to rule and feed them. This is a Conſtitution of Chriſt which is directly thwarted and oppoſed by a Generation of looſe and rambling Chriſtians, that content themſelves with bare *Hearing*, V.

and

and that too in a very odd way. For they are a sort of volatile Auditors, perpetually frisking too and fro, and can fix no where. Were all Men of this humour, there could be no such thing as particular Churches, which Christ hath appointed for the edifying of his Members. And how they can rationally expect to flourish either in Grace or Peace, while they live in a direct opposition to a manifest Institution of our Lord Jesus, which was not more an effect of his Authority than of his Wisdom and Goodness, I wish Men would seriously consider. Are any of you so self-sufficient, that you need no Pastor, nor the assistance of your fellow Christians to watch over, admonish, rebuke, exhort, comfort, strengthen, and counsel you? Are there none of the Churches of Christ that are *pure enough?* None of them that have *latitude*, or *strictness* enough for you? None of them worthy enough for you to join your selves unto? When our Lord hath given such variety of Gifts to his Ministers, is there none of them whose Abilities suit you, and please your curious Palates, that by settling under them you may be edified? I may say to such Persons as *Constantine* once did to such a self-conceited Man, *Take a Ladder, and climb up to Heaven by thy self alone.* In short,

ſhort, a Society of Believers walking together in Goſpel Order, is like the excellent compoſure of Syllables, Words, and Sentences, that have a great deal of Senſe and Signification in them. But a ſeparated and divided Chriſtian, that will join himſelf to no Church, is like a *ſingle* Letter, or a *disjointed* Syllable that is perfect Nonſenſe.

EIGHT

EIGHT DISCOURSES ON II SAM. xxiii, 5.

SERMON I.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made with me an everlaſting Covenant, order'd in all things and ſure: for this is all my ſalvation and all my deſire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THE words contain'd in this Chapter, from the third to the end of the ſeventh Verſe (whereof my Text is a part) are introduced in the firſt, ſecond, and

and part of the third Verse, with a lofty Preface, the better to engage our Minds to a due consideration of 'em: In order whereunto Three things are mention'd.

I. I. That these are the *last* Words of *David*. Now the last Words of a Man in his dying Moments, are wont to be observed more than any others. For as the Flame of a Lamp, whose Oil is almost wasted, just before it goes out, sometimes shoots up higher than before: So the Soul, just as 'tis ready to be loosed from the Body, sometimes has nobler Flights than ordinary. However, to be sure that's no time to trifle or play the Hypocrite. And therefore the Speeches of dying Men are wont to be very weighty and serious, mightily affect the standers by, and make a deep Impression upon 'em.

But yet the Wisdom of the Poor Man both living and dying too, may be despised; because of the meaness of him who utters the Oracle, and the Folly of them that hear it. And therefore,

II. II. The Character of *David* is added to recommend what is spoken to us. *David, the son of Jesse, said, and the Man, who was raised up on high, the Anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said.* He was a mighty *Prince*, one of great *Experience*, and a famous *Author*,

thor. He was a mighty Prince: God had advanced him to the Throne of *Israel*. Now the wise and grave Speeches of a King have a sort of Majesty in them, like him from whom they proceed, carry Authority with 'em, and command Respect and Attention. And *David* was moreover a Man of great Experience, He was originally the Son of *Jesse*, a private Man, but from a mean State God had raised him up on high, and here in my Text we find him brought very low again, having a sad Prospect of the great Calamities of his Family: So that he hath fully tried both states of Life, God having *lifted him up and cast him down*. And besides he was a known and famous Author, *the sweet Psalmist of Israel*; highly esteem'd in the Church of God for his many holy and useful Compositures of Spiritual Hymns, who was wont to lead the People in their Devotions as well as in their Battles, could handle the Instruments of Musick as well as the Weapons of War, and was as considerable in the Temple as ever he had been in the Field.

If any thing further be necessary to engage our Attention, it must be an Inspiration from Heaven, that so the Instructions may not be the Issues of meer Humane Prudence, but the Dictates of Divine

Divine Wisdom. And this is not wanting. For,

III. III. 'Tis further added, *The Spirit of*
v. 2, 3. *the Lord spake by me, and his Spirit was in my Tongue: the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake unto me.* Seeing therefore he who speaks to us was a dying Man, a great King, of large Experience, and of an established Reputation for Skill and Piety, full of Days and of the Holy Ghost too, let *him that hath Ears to hear*, hearken to what he says.

And the things which he delivers, abstracting from all the fore-going Particulars, are so great in themselves, that they may make way by their own weight, and sink down into the Hearts of wise and understanding Men. For he begins his Discourse with the Duty and Character of a good King, as to the two main Points, *viz.*
v. 3. Justice and Piety. *He that rules over Men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord.* And elegantly describes the happiness of a People who live under such a *Phœnix*, by two natural and easie Figures of *the light of the morning wherein there is no cloud,*
v. 4. and the *tender grass springing out of the earth by the clear shining of the sun after the rain.* But then considering how unlike to this the present state of his Family was, and how much worse in all probability

bility matters would go with 'em; he turns his Thoughts to the Covenant of God as a rich Cordial to support his fainting Spirit. This he does in the Words I have now pitcht upon.

> *Altho' my House be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure; for this is all my desire, and all my salvation, altho' he make it not to grow.*

In which Words we have these two Parts.

I. A sad supposition which holy *David* makes, with which he begins and closes the Verse. *Altho' my House be not so with God*, so he begins: *Altho' he make it not to grow*, so he ends. The doubling the Expression, setting it in the Front and Rear too, shews that his Family Afflictions had created many uneasie Thoughts in his Mind, and went very near his Heart. *q. d.* I and mine have not been so good as we should, nor so prosperous as we might have been; we have neither so ruled others, nor governed our selves, but that many disorders have broken forth among us, and many Afflictions have befaln us; and there's a long black train of I.

Evils yet behind. We have not been like the *light of a Morning without any Clouds*; but many a sad Providence hath overshadowed my Family and darkened the Glory of it: And I foresee, that after my approaching decease, instead of flourishing like the *springing Grass* by the warm Beams of the Sun after a refreshing Rain, they will wither away like the Grass by the scorching heat of Summer.

II. II. We have the Course holy and dying *David* takes to support himself under these melancholly Thoughts and Circumstances. *Yet hath he made with me*, &c. Where observe,

1. What he pitches his Thoughts upon, *viz.* the *Covenant* which God had made with him. By which we are not to understand the promise of continuing the Kingdom to him and to his Seed, or the preserving his Line and Family *any further* than as the preservation of that was necessary for the Birth of the Messiah who was to descend from his House. This plainly appears from the Character of *David*, who was an eminent Saint, and to such the World is not very charming, but they are dead and crucified to it: And from what he had now in so full and near a view before him, both with reference to his *House*, that God *would not*

not make it grow; and with reference to *Himself*, for he had Death before him; a greater Monarch than he himself was, the King of Terrors, who may also be called the Kings of Kings, for he hath and will subdue them all, and Reign over all Mankind, whereas *David* ruled comparatively over but a small handful. This Universal Monarch now stood by his Bedside, and was on the point of Conquering him, and carrying him away Captive in Triumph. *David* had e'en almost done with this World, and but as a few Moments longer to live in it. Now this would have been but a very thin and sorry Comfort to so very holy a Man, especially in his last Moments, to think that his Family should continue but in a very shatter'd and broken condition. 'Tis plain it must be somewhat nobler than this, no less than the Covenant of God in Christ, the Covenant of Grace that hath Heaven in the Bowels of it, whence he draws his present Comfort, as became a Man of his Spirit and Temper, and one under his present Circumstances, who was drawing his last Breath.

2. The excellent Properties of this Covent. They are Three. 'Tis an *everlasting*, a *sure* one, and *order'd in all things*. And therefore 'tis *well ordered*, because 'tis *sure* and *everlasting*, it shall

never be Repealed by God, nor finally broken by Man.

3. The great value which he sets upon it. *For this is all my Salvation and all my desire. q. d.* If God would have saved me and mine from temporal Miseries, and largely bless'd my Family with the good things of this Life, I would have bless'd his Name on that Account. But seeing he has otherwise determin'd, I submit: I am at a Point: I see so little in the World, and so much in the Blessings of the Covenant, that I desire no better, I can't wish for any other Happiness than what is contained in it. My whole is wrapt up in this blessed Covenant of Grace; and being interested in that I have enough. This quiets and composes my Spirit, *altho' my House be not so with God, and altho' he make it not to grow.*

From the Words thus open'd we may observe two Doctrines.

I. I. The great Evils which may befal the Family of a very holy Man can't but be very afflictive to him.

II. Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Interest in it will give him great Relief under such very afflictive Circumstances.

I begin with the Firſt of theſe, *viz. The great Evils which may befal the Family of a very holy Man, can't but be very afflictive to him.*

I will but briefly handle this Point; and therefore ſhall only,

I. Give the Reaſons of it. And then, I.
II. Apply it. II.

I. For the Reaſons of the Point. Family Afflictions muſt needs make deep Impreſſions on the Heart of a Saint. I.

I. Becauſe of that tender, and ſometimes too great Affection that he bears towards thoſe of his own Houſe. God who knows our Make and Frame, and how ſtrongly our Pulſe does beat towards thoſe that are nearly related to us, hath, for that very reaſon, wiſely enforced Obedience to his Commands by Arguments drawn from this Head, Promiſes of Mercy, and Threatnings of Judgments upon our Families. Nature teaches us to love theſe, and Grace (which gives a Heart of Fleſh) does further incline us ſo to do. And ſuch is our Folly, that herein we hardly know any Bounds; we open the Floud-gates and pour out our Afflictions in a full Stream, and are apt to think we do well even when we exceed. I.

For ought that I can obſerve, inordinate affection to 'em is one of the moſt common ſins among good Men, which they are hardly cured of either by ſaving Grace or the ſevereſt Providences. 'Tis the *laſt* Evil that is mortified in 'em. When they come to die themſelves, and are dead to all things elſe, 'tis difficult to die to them. Men naturally look back very wiſhly upon them, juſt as they themſelves are putting off from the ſhoar of this World, and launching forth into Eternity: They have much a do then to ſhake Hands with them, and bid them farewel with any Spirit and Courage. What muſt it be then, and how will it make their Bowels to yearn, and their Hearts to turn and boil within 'em, when they ſee Calamities faſten upon 'em, Wants pinching 'em, Pains griping, Diſeaſes waſting, and Death ſeizing 'em, and tho' they look 'em in the Face, not to be able to help 'em any other way, but by pouring out a ſhower of Tears over 'em, lifting up a few broken Prayers for 'em, interrupted with deep Sighs, and hollow Groans, longer than their Petitions for 'em? And all this while the life of Affection is whole and ſtrong. To have them ſnacht away from us that are Fleſh of our Fleſh, and Bone of our Bone, dear as the Apple of our Eye, as our own Souls,

Harriſon's Top. Sac.

Souls, yea that are our *ſelves* ; This is like tearing off our Limbs while we are alive, yea rending aſunder one Faculty of our Soul from another. *The Spirit of a Man will ſuſtain his own* perſonal *Infirmities* ; but the Calamities of his *Houſe* pierce deeper, touch him to the quick, ſtrike like a poiſon'd Dagger plung'd into and thro' his very Soul, and make his Spirit to bleed and faint within him.

II. Such ſad Providences are apt to bring Men's Sins to their Remembrance, and much diſtreſs ſerious Perſons if they can't find 'em out. The Head of a Family ſtands in ſeveral very different relations, and is apt, like a Watch that has many different Motions, to go wrong as to one of 'em at leaſt ; and 'tis well if it be not irregular and faulty in all. Few Men need to look long to find out the cauſe of thoſe Breaches which God makes upon 'em. The Root on which our Wormwood that is put into our Cup does grow, don't lye ſo very deep under Ground as to require much digging to come at it. The light of Scripture will point it out, if Men have but a mind to ſee, and Conſcience ſpeak in a Language eaſie to be underſtood if Men have but an Ear to hear. Now tis a melancholly thing to have Troubles without and Guilt within at one and the II.

same time. 'Tis sad indeed when a person shall say, My Husband, my Wife, my Children are sick or dead, and my sins have wounded or slain 'em. My offences against God open'd the Door at which the Enemy enter'd, and robbed me of my dearest Treasure, and buried it under Ground.

Sometimes indeed, these and other Afflictions are not Punishments of our Faults, but meer Trials of our Graces; as is evident from the case of *Job*. You know the ample Testimony God himself gives of him. And as for his Children, to be sure they were religiously educated, and seem to be piously inclined. Or else, so many young Persons so often Feasting together, would have been guilty of great Extravagancies, and the Tidings of it would have come to the Ears of so jealous a Father as *Job* was, who, without question, had his Spies upon 'em; and he would not have spoken so doubtfully about 'em as he does, only *it may be that my Sons have sinned, and cursed God* (not with their Tongues, *Job* 1. 5. but) *in their Hearts, i. e.* have had slight and irreverent Thoughts of him.

And yet you know how sadly he was stripp'd of all.

But suppose this be the case, yet under sore Family Afflictions, a godly Man is apt to be jealous over himself with a godly

Jea-

Jealouſie ; ſuſpicious that ſome Sin or other is the hidden Spring of all. Whereupon he is not a little concern'd when he is forced to cry out, *Shew me O Lord*, for I am at a loſs, *wherefore it is that thou contendeſt with me.* Job 10.2. He cannot but be troubled, that when God *writes bitter things againſt* him, 'tis in ſuch a Character that he is ſore afraid he does not read aright, nor throughly underſtand the ſenſe and meaning of it.

III. This muſt be grievous to a Good Man, becauſe of the difficulty of ſuppreſſing thoſe Corruptions which are accidentally awakened by ſuch Providences, and performing thoſe Duties which they call for. There's a great Sediment at the bottom of every Veſſel, and when 'tis much ſhaken, no wonder if all that is within grow thick and muddy. Unworthy ſuſpicions of God, hard thoughts of Providence, Swellings of heart againſt the Decrees of Heaven, Envy at the proſperity of others, and a great many other Evils we are liable unto upon ſuch occaſions. Otherwiſe it would not have been ſo ſignally taken notice of as ſo peculiar a ſtroke in *Job*'s Character, that *in all this he ſinned not, nor charged God foolishly.* Job 1.22. III.

And

And as there's great difficulty in reſiſting Evil, ſo there is alſo in doing Good, and performing thoſe Duties which ſuch ſevere ſtrokes do call for. 'Tis our Duty indeed, and 'tis our Wiſdom and Intereſt in ſuch caſes, to humble our ſelves under God's Hand, fall down at his Foot; to hold our Peace, or if we do open our Mouths, to juſtify God and condemn our ſelves; to adore and love him ſtill, and keep to this as the ſtanding Senſe of our Souls, that however it be, *God is good to his Iſrael, even to all that are of a clean heart.* That *all his ways are mercy and truth*, though ſome ſteps of his Providence are Dark and Intricate. To wait upon him in the way of his Judgments, and not have our hearts alienated from him by his ſmarteſt Rods. This is to Row againſt Wind and Tide both. We ſhall find there will be need of hard and continued labour, and we ſhall be often driven down by the violence of the Storm and ſtrength of the Current. Sometimes we ſhall be able it may be to fall down and Adore, but by and by be ready to murmur and complain: be ſubmiſſive one Hour, and apt to quarrel the next. Now this upon Reflection will be uneaſie to a Holy Soul. When he recollects himſelf, the good Principle within will riſe up in hatred of, and oppoſition againſt ſuch

unto-

untoward changes as these. *Surely I have not the understanding of a Man*, much less the Faith of a Christian. *I have been as a Beast in thy sight*, O Lord, thus to kick and toss, fling and roar when I am wounded by thy hand.

IV. We are often in the Dark as to our special Interest in God and his Covenant. And then such Providences as these, fill us with more gloomy Thoughts. We can't fetch that Relief from the Covenant of God that would buoy up our Spirits, because we are at a mighty loss, whither we are indeed within the Bond thereof. IV.

V. Hereupon a Man is laid open to the furious Assaults of Satan. When the Night comes, the Evil Beasts walk about, and when we are in the Dark, they will be apt to leap out and seize the trembling Prey. Eminent Piety is no defence, but will rather enrage him, and make him fall on the more eagerly. 'Tis a Victory indeed to Conquer a Saint. This hungry Lyon would fain devour one of the Sheep of Christ, as a sweeter Morcel than many of the Dogs and Swine of this World. Now if Satan *winnow us as Wheat*, abundance of Chaffe will fly off. There's no Sin so Vile, so V.

Unna-

Unnatural, ſo Black and Scandalous, but he who had the Face to tempt the Bleſſed Jeſus to Self-murder, and the moſt horrid Idolatry, will have the confidence to tempt us unto ; and he may carry us to the very brink of the fatal Precipice, and puſh us down, unleſs the hand of Mercy reached forth from Heaven reſcue and ſave us.

VI. VI. A Man's miſery is often aggravated by the Cenſures of others. Many will make no allowance for any Overſights ; for the not uſing ſuch methods, which it may be the ſick Party could not be prevailed to ſubmit unto ; for the deference that in ſome Caſes a Prudent Man is obliged to pay to other Relations. Every Fool will *ſit* upon the *dead body*, though he know little of the matter ; and as if he were an Officer and had Authority, will bring in a *Verdict* like himſelf.

VII. VII. We are apt to fix on ſome Circumſtance or other to aggravate our Loſs, and countenance our perverſe Behaviour. I have loſt a moſt dear Relative or moſt intimate Friend ; and 'tis no wonder when a right Hand is cut off, or a right Eye plucked out, if I be in danger of bleeding to death. I am deprived

deprived of one whoſe Help I could ill ſpare, and whom I ſhall dearly miſs when I am languiſhing under the yearly returns of my ſharp Diſeaſes and cruel Pains. Or he was cut off in the Flower of his Days; whereas had he lived till he had been Old I could have born it: Or the only Prop of my Family, the Staff of my old Age, and the Pillar to ſupport my Name, the only Son or Heir of the Family is removed: Or he was very Hopeful, and exceeding Pious; and ſo we draw Darkneſs out of Light, and extract Bitterneſs out of that which is Sweet, make that the Matter of our Diſquiet, which is the greateſt Support and Comfort; for if it be ſo, they are fallen aſleep in Jeſus. Or elſe (which is the hardeſt of all to be born) my Child was cut off in the midſt of his ſins, and I can't hope or think but that he is ſunk down into the place of Torment. Whereas this ſhould have been thought on before; 'tis too late now. But yet, if for the main, we honeſtly did what we could, we however are free from their Bloud; if not, we ſhould turn the Stream of our Grief into that Channel; and thankfully adore the diſcriminating Grace of God, that we have not been driven away in our Wickedneſs like Smoak before the Wind.

But

But if we have nothing elſe to fix upon, then we torment ourſelves, becauſe we think more proper Methods might have been uſed for their Recovery, when the ſad Event ſhews we were miſtaken; tho' we followed the beſt Light we had. This is folly indeed; for we are dejected becauſe we are not what God never made us, *Infallible Creatures.* But yet 'tis hard in many caſes to avoid this. We very imprudently caſt our ſelves down while we give way to ſuch vain Wiſhes, O that I had ſteered another Courſe, for then the Shipwrack had been avoided!

VIII. VIII. I might add the Civilities of our Friends on ſuch Occaſions. There are Faſhions and Forms of Condoleance as well as of other things; which a Man knows not how to want, and yet can't well tell how to receive without uneaſineſs. This is rubbing on the Sore, which muſt pain one tho' it be done with a gentle Hand; and opening the Wound, which makes it ſmart, tho' it be with the kind Intention of pouring in heal'ing Balm. To be ſure they refreſh our Sorrows while they pretend to expreſs their own.

Laſtly, 'Tis hard in this, as well as in all other caſes, (and harder to be thought to do ſo) to hit on the middle Path between both the Extreams, of deſpiſing

the Chaſtening of the Lord, or fainting under his Rebukes. Either of theſe is ſinful, and a blemiſh to our Profeſſion. We take little notice of his Hand, or elſe we are apt to quarrel 'tis too rough and heavy. Either our Souls are as a dead Sea whoſe Waters do not ſtir; or like a ſtormy one whoſe Waves do roar. And a cenſorious World will be prone to reproach us for wandering either to the right Hand or the Left.

I'll cloſe this Point with a little brief Application.

1. Let all the Members, but eſpecially the Heads of Families, have a care how they behave themſelves. Purge your Dwellings, walk in your Houſes with a perfect Heart and in a perfect way. Commit no ſin your ſelves, and allow it not in others. God ſees if you wink at it, and he will puniſh if you do not.

2. Let thoſe who fear or feel ſevere Family Judgments, ſee that they be Internal and ſpiritually within the Bond of the Covenant, clear up their Intereſt in it, and improve it by Meditation, Faith and Prayer. Holy *David* did ſo, tho' he had not the Covenant of Grace ſo fully open'd to him as 'tis to Believers under the Goſpel. Tho' the World may count them miſerable, and they may be apt, in a pang of Unbelief, to call themſelves ſo; yet

yet happy Souls are they, who cannot only begin with my Text, but read on to the end of it, and upon good Grounds say, *Altho' my House be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting Covenant, order'd in all things and sure; for this is all my Salvation, and all my Desire, altho' he make it not to grow.*

SERM.

SERMON II.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made with me an everlaſting Covenant, order'd in all things and ſure: for this is all my ſalvation and all my deſire, altho' he make it not to grow.

TWO Doctrines have been obſerved from theſe Words.

I. The great Evils which may befal the Family of a Holy Man, can't but be very afflictive to him. This I have finiſh'd: I wiſh I could truly ſay I had *done with* that melancholly Subject. However, I now turn my Thoughts to another that is more bright and pleaſing, *viz.* The Second Doctrine. I.

II. Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Intereſt in it will give a Man Relief and Comfort in all his Afflictions, whether Perſonal or Family ones. II.

In the managing this Point I will do theſe Four Things.

I. I. Briefly open the *Nature* of the Cove-
II. nant of Grace.
III. II. Speak to the *Properties* of it.
III. Shew *how* a Man may draw Support and Comfort thence under all Afflictions, whether Perſonal or Family ones.
IV. IV. *Why* a holy Man will and ought to betake himſelf to this Covenant of Grace in order thereunto under all his Troubles.

I. I. I will briefly open the *Nature* of the Covenant of Grace. I am not now to treat of the Covenant of *Redemption* between the Father and the Son: Nor of the *National Covenant* of the Jews, which ſome call the Covenant of *Peculiarity*: Nor of the Covenant of Grace it ſelf, meerly *as it ſtood in David*'s time: But as we have it now in the *laſt* and *beſt Edition* of it ſince the coming and Suffering of Chriſt.

And I ſhall endeavour to lead you into an eaſie and clear Underſtanding of, in the following Propoſitions.

1. The Covenant of Grace is nothing elſe but the Goſpel, or the Promiſe of Bleſſedneſs by Jeſus Chriſt caſt into a Covenant Form. The truth of this will appear from Three places of Scripture compared

pared together. Says the Apoſtle, *The Scripture fore-ſeeing that God would juſtifie the Heathen thro' Faith, preached before the Goſpel unto Abraham.* Now what was this Goſpel? It was the Promiſe of Bleſſedneſs by Jeſus Chriſt. For ſo it follows— *preached the Goſpel unto Abraham, ſaying, In thee, i. e.* in and thro' the Meſſiah, who is to deſcend from thy Loins, *ſhall all Nations be bleſſed.* Now this which is here called the *Goſpel*, is called the *Promiſe* and the *Covenant* in the ſeventeenth Verſe. *And this I ſay, that the Covenant that was confirmed before of God in Chriſt, the Law which was Four Hundred and Thirty Years after, cannot diſannul, that it ſhould make the Promiſe of none effect.* Add to theſe but one place more, *Acts* 3. 25. *Ye are the Children of the Prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with our Fathers, ſaying unto Abraham, And in thy Seed ſhall all the Kindreds of the Earth be bleſſed.* So that you ſee the Scripture calls one and the ſame thing by theſe three different Names, the *Goſpel*, the *Promiſe*, and the *Covenant*. Gal. 3 8.

And this word *Grace* is wont to be added to it by Divines, who uſually call it the *Covenant of Grace*, to ſhew, that the *Bleſſings* promiſed in it on God's part, and the nature of the *Terms* required on Man's part, and *Ability* to perform 'em flow

from the free, rich, undeſerved Mercy and Favour of God to wretched, ſinful, miſerable, undone Creatures. The fixing ſuch *Terms* as are ſo very reaſonable, and ſo very low, yea and the *Command* to lay hold on the Covenant, and perform the Terms of it, and alſo the adding of *Threatnings* as an Appendix to the Covenant, as well as the Promiſe of the *Bleſſings* of it, are ſignal Inſtances of Divine Grace. It ſhould make our Hearts to ſpring and leap within us for joy, that the *Terms* of the Covenant are made *Duties*, and I am *commanded* to perform them, that I may not miſs of the Bleſſings of it: So that to believe on our Lord Jeſus Chriſt is not *Preſumption* but *Obedience*; and if I do not do ſo, I am guilty of Rebellion againſt God, as well as of murdering my own Soul. And that I may the more effectually be quicken'd to my Duty in order to my ſafety, the ſevereſt Threatenings are ſuper-added; becauſe God who underſtands our untoward Make and Frame, knows, that were it not for the fears of Hell, Heaven would be an empty place. For there the Work does generally begin.

Grace indeed ſhines and *reigns* throughout the whole of the Covenant. So deſirous is God of my Eternal Welfare, that he tries to do me good by all manner of Me-

Methods. He endeavours to work on my *Ingenuity*, by his love in Chriſt; for he propounds to me a Covenant of Reconciliation and Friendſhip, founded in the Bloud of his own dear Son. And he makes uſe of his Soveraign *Authority*, commanding me to accept of his Covenant, that it may go well with me for ever. He allures me alſo to do it by the exceeding greatneſs of his precious *Promiſes*, eſpecially that great Promiſe of *Eternal Life*. And to make all ſure, he conſtrains me by the ſeverity of his *Threatenings*, and eſpecially that terrible one of exquiſite, univerſal, *everlaſting Miſery*; that ſo by the Fears of Hell, if nothing elſe will do, he may compel me to enter into Heaven.

Now all theſe Motives are the higheſt and ſtrongeſt in their ſeveral kinds. What greater Argument can be propoſed to work upon *Ingenuity*, than what is drawn from his Love in Chriſt? There can be no greater *Authority* than that of God, whereby I am ſtraitly required to Repent that I may not periſh, and believe on Jeſus Chriſt, that I may be ſaved. Nothing greater than Heaven can be *Promiſed*; nothing more frightful than Hell can be *Threatened*. Here is GRACE, that no Method is left unattempted, that's proper to work upon a reaſonable Creature.

For if all theſe Four greateſt Weights together will not move all the Springs of Humane Action within, no Motives can make 'em ſtir.

2. The Covenant of Grace is of the ſame General Nature with Human Covenants. This I think will appear from that Paſſage of the Apoſtle, where to prove that the Covenant of God in Chriſt made with *Abraham* could not be deſtroyed by the Law that was given Four Hundred and Thirty Years after, uſes this Argument, *viz. That tho' it be but a Man's Covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no Man diſanulleth or addeth thereunto.* Now if it ſo in an Honeſt Man's Covenant, 'tis much more ſo in God's. The whole weight of the Apoſtle's Argument leans upon this Suppoſition, that the Covenant of Grace is of the ſame Nature with Humane Covenants; for otherwiſe there could be no ſtrength in his arguing from the one to the other.

3. A Humane Covenant is a mutual Agreement between two Parties (or more) binding themſelves to each other upon certain Terms. Do but conſult your own Thoughts about the matter, what do you mean when you ſpeak of a Covenant between your ſelves and any of your Neighbours, and you will preſently ſee this is what you underſtand thereby.

There

There are certain *Terms* in a Covenant, which makes a Covenant differ from an *abſolute* Promiſe.

And the Parties, Two (or more) do mutually bind themſelves to each other; which makes the difference between a *Promiſe* and a Covenant. For a Promiſe may bind but one Party only; whither it be Abſolute or Conditional. Now hence it follows.

4. And Laſtly, That the Covenant of Grace is a mutual Agreement between God thro' Chriſt on the one hand, and fallen Man on the other, wherein they mutually Engage themſelves to each other upon certain Terms. God engages in and thro' Chriſt to bleſs us; and we by the help of his Grace, engage our ſelves to obey him, that ſo we may be bleſſed by him. He thro' the Mediator, promiſes to be our God, and we conſent to be his People. He promiſes Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal Bleſſings to us upon ſuppoſition of our Faith, Repentance and Perſeverence, which by his Spirit he enables us to perform. And we engage to Believe, Repent, and Perſevere by the help of his Spirit, as ever we hope to obtain thoſe Bleſſings.

I ſhall have occaſion hereafter to treat of theſe particular Bleſſings, and of the Terms or Condition. All that I ſhall

now further add upon this Head, ſhall be with reſpect to the Federating Parties, which I have ſaid to be *God* in and thro' Chriſt on the one hand, and *fallen Man* on the other.

There has been a debate among Divines, whither the Covenant of Grace were made with *Chriſt* : Which hath been occaſion'd by that Paſſage of the Apoſtle, *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the Promiſes made : He ſaith not, And to Seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Chriſt.* Now this ſome underſtand of Chriſt *Myſtical*, *i. e.* the Church or Believers : Others, of Chriſt *Perſonal* : And others of *Both.* Not to trouble you with the Arguments on one ſide or t'other ; a little Light will end thoſe Debates which Heat has kindled. A good diſtinction will often do more than many Arguments to decide a Controverſie. To ſtate this Point clearly is to end it. Which therefore I ſhall attempt in theſe Three following Particulars.

Gal. 3. 16.

(1) 'Tis plain, that the Covenant of Grace is not made with our Lord Jeſus Chriſt *excluſively* of all Mankind. In the very Scripture now before us, the Apoſtle ſaith, the Promiſe was made to *Abraham* himſelf as well as to his Seed, whoever be meant by that Seed of his. And ſays *David* in my Text, *He hath made with ME an everlaſting Covenant.* (2) That

(2) That the Covenant of Grace was made *with Christ* in some Sense is true, provided it be rightly understood. *i. e.* He must be consider'd, not in a private, but in his publick Capacity; as the Lord Redeemer; as the second *Adam*; as the Head of the Elect; and in and through him the Covenant is made with them as his Seed. The meaning of which is but this, *viz.* That God engaged to Christ, that we should be blessed by him here, and hereafter, provided that we did perform the Duties and Terms of Repentance, Faith and Perseverence in a course of holy Obedience, which by his special Grace he will enable his People to do, that so he may have a Generation to serve him here, and be saved by him hereafter, and his Soul be satisfied therein, that he has not run in vain, nor labour'd in vain. So that in all things Christ has (as 'tis fit he should have) the *Pre-eminence*; we claiming all by and under him, by vertue of our Union or Relation to him. Which I take to be by vertue of the Covenant of Redemption, and to be one of the Articles of it: So that the Covenant of *Grace* grows out of the Covenant of *Redemption*, as a Branch from the Body of a Tree; or is built upon it as its Basis or Foundation.

(3) If

(3) If by the Persons with whom the Covenant is made, be meant they who are bound personally to perform the Duties, and who are to enjoy the Blessings of it, the Covenant is made with *fallen Man only*, and not with our Lord Jesus Christ. For 'tis we that are bound to Believe and Repent; Christ does not Believe or Repent for us. 'Tis we that are pardon'd and not Christ; we that are saved from Hell and eternal Ruin, which he never deserved, nor was in danger of. And if we do not Repent and Believe, we are the persons that shall neither be pardon'd here nor saved hereafter. Christ had no sins to be forgiven; and when ours were imputed to him, he was not spared, but made full satisfaction, nothing being remitted to him. The Command and the Motives are addressed to us: We are required to lay hold on the Covenant, and consent to it, or else we shall perish. For tho' God hath sworn as he lives, he desires not the death of a Sinner, yet he is not so fond of our living, as to abolish the Constitution which he has so wisely settled in his holy Gospel. We must turn or else we shall dye; we must repent, or else after all we shall perish; and believe, or else we shall be damned. Says *Bildad* to *Job*, *Shall the Earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the Rock be removed out of his place?*

Job. 18. 4.

place? Or the wise Counsels of Heaven, that are much more firm and stable than either of 'em, be overturn'd to humour thee in thy Lusts and Follies, and preserve thee from Perdition? The unbelieving Lord said, *That can't be if God should make Windows in Heaven.* Truly God must make new Gates to Heaven before an Impenitent Unbeliever can enter in. For tho' there be *Twelve*, yet they are all lock'd and barr'd against such Men; and a flaming Sword turning every way keeps 'em off, that they shall not be able to come near to gather any of the Fruits which grow on thee Tree of Life, that is planted in the midst of the Paradise of God above.

Having treated briefly of the Nature of the Covenant of Grace, I proceed to discourse,

II. Of the Properties of it. There are three of 'em mention'd in my Text. II.

'Tis an *everlasting* one: God will never abolish or lay it aside to make room for another; and everlasting Mercies are contain'd in the Bowels of it.

'Tis a *sure* one: Provision being made therein, that they who are once Internally and Spiritually within the Bond of it, shall never totally or finally break it, and so miss all the Blessings of it.

And

And then 'tis a Covenant *Order'd in all things.*

'Tis this laſt Property only that I intend to inſiſt upon, in the handling whereof the reſt will naturally fall in. For therefore among other Reaſons, is the Covenant well order'd in all things, becauſe 'tis a ſure and an everlaſting one.

Now in managing this Point, I will ſhew,

I. I. The Meaning of the Word.
II. II. The Truth of the Thing.

I. As for the meaning of the Word or Phraſe, *Order'd in all things.* So is any thing ſaid to be, when all the ſeveral Parts of it are ſo rightly diſpoſed in their reſpective places, as happily to work together for the attaining the proper End and Deſign of that matter. This is what we intend, when we ſay of any Project, that it was order'd in all Points; *viz.* That it was not ſuddenly, raſhly, or fooliſhly laid or manag'd; but all the ſeveral parts of it ſo wiſely adjuſted, ſo well contriv'd and proſecuted, with ſuch a dependance of one Step upon another, that the Man gains his Point. So when we uſe the ſame Expreſſion of a Society, or Family, we mean that Superiours and Inferiours are ſo fixed each of 'em in their proper Poſts, keep

keep their reſpective Stations, perform their ſeveral Offices, that the End of entring into ſuch a Society, which is the Glory of God, and the mutual Benefit of the ſeveral Members of it, is happily attained. That alſo is the meaning of the Expreſſion, when 'tis uſed concerning the Covenant of Grace. The End and Deſign of God therein to be ſure muſt be, in the firſt place, his own *Glory*; next to that, the *Honour of Chriſt*; and then the ſecuring the *Duty*, *Comfort*, and *Happineſs* of Man. Now if all Points relating to the Covenant are ſo diſpoſed in their reſpective places as moſt naturally tends to ſecure theſe great *Ends*, then may it be truly ſaid of this Covenant, that 'tis *well Order'd in all things*. Now this is what in the

II. Place I undertake to prove. In order whereunto I muſt take theſe Three Things into Conſideration. II.

I. The Mediator and Surety of the Covenant. I.
II. The Bleſſings promiſed in it. II.
III. The Terms required by it. III.

And under theſe two laſt Heads, I ſhall be obliged to ſpeak of the Threatnings annexed as an Appendix to the Covenant.

venant. For 'tis very idle to talk of Promiſes and Terms, if Men may enjoy the former without performing the latter. Yea the Covenant of Grace being enjoined by him who is our Soveraign Lord, as well as our compaſſionate Friend, and we being commanded as well as invited to accept of it; it being his Law of Grace as well as his Covenant of Grace; 'tis Sin and Rebellion, as well as Folly and Madneſs, not to lay hold of it. Wherefore thereby we not only loſe all the Bleſſings therein propoſed, but expoſe our ſelves to further Vengeance for our Ingratitude and Diſobedience.

Now if I prove, that as to *all* theſe fore-mention'd Points, matters are ſo contrived in a moſt natural tendency to attain the aforeſaid great and glorious Ends, then I ſhall have proved, that the Covenant is wiſely and well order'd in all things.

I begin with,

I. I. The *Mediator* and Surety of the Covenant; who is our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, God and Man. Now it was neceſſary that there ſhould be one, and ſuch a one in all reſpects as he was, as will appear by theſe Four following Conſiderations.

I. I. We

I. We are Sinful,	Creatures.	I.
II. Fooliſh and Rebellious,		II.
III. Suſpicious,		III.
IV. Treacherous & Deceitful		IV.

I. We are *Sinful* Creatures. Now tho' the infinite diſtance between Him and Us does not hinder an immediate Covenanting between God and Innocent Man; yet Holineſs on his ſide, and Guilt on ours, does hinder it between him and fallen Man. 'Tis not becoming the Honour of God, to treat with apoſtate Creatures in their own Names in a way of Mercy and Grace. Nor can they with any aſſurance and confidence think of treating with him. We can have no other Views of God conſider'd abſolutely in himſelf, than that of *Moſes*, who ſaw him under the Emblem of a *burning Buſh*, full of flaming Thorns to wound and conſume us both together. The very thoughts, much more the glorious diſplay of his Majeſty, Holineſs and Juſtice, would ſhake all our Powers, ſtriking terrour and confuſion into the Center, and throughout every corner of our Souls. Hence the very ſight of God, or of any thing that did but reſemble his Glory, hath made Men conclude they ſhould immediately dye; and the very remembrance of God I.

God has made the Spirits of convinced Sinners to fail within 'em.

II. II. We are *Fooliſh* and *Rebellious* Creatures. We are naturally unwilling to enter into a Covenant of Reconciliation and Friendſhip with God, tho' it be not more our Duty than 'tis our Intereſt. We are called Reaſonable Creatures indeed, but act as tho' we were wholly void of Underſtanding; for we chuſe to proſecute the War with Heaven, which muſt be ruinous in the Iſſue where the Hoſtility is continued between two Parties ſo very unequal, as the Almighty Being and a ſorry Worm. Yet thus it laſts, till by revealing a Day of Power in our Hearts, we become a conquer'd People; for before that we will not ſubmit nor accept of any, tho' the moſt reaſonable and advantagious Terms.

III. III. We are *Suſpicious* Creatures too. This Conſideration anſwers the Objection made by the *Socinians*, as well as ſome others, *viz.* that Chriſt could not be a Surety for God to Us, becauſe Sureties are required only where there is want of Fidelity or Ability, which can have no place in God. They might as well argue againſt God's *Oath*, ſaying his meer Word is ſufficient. For an Oath is required only

only to aſſure us of their truth of which there may be ſome reaſonable doubt, which can have no place in God. For his Word is unqueſtionably true, firmer than the Pillars of Heaven, or the Foundations of the Earth; for the one ſhall be broken down, and the other ſhall be pluck'd up, but not ſo much as one Word, one Syllable, one Jott of the Word of God ſhall ever drop to the ground. But yet to his Word, God hath ſuper-added his *Oath* that we might have the *more abundant conſolation*: For we are *Guilty* Creatures; and *Guilt* is a terrible thing; it makes us very jealous. For the ſame reaſon we have a *Surety*. A drowſie Sinner will not believe the Threatnings; and an awaken'd Soul is apt to doubt of the Promiſes of God. Wherefore in condeſcenſion to our Infirmities, God has given us full meaſure of aſſurance preſſed down and running over: not becauſe He is Weak or Unfaithful; but becauſe we are apt to *ſtagger through unbelief*.

IV. We are *weak*, *treacherous* and *deceitful* Creatures. Uncertain as Weather, fickle as the Wind, *unſtable as the Water*. Our Bodies do not oftner change Poſtures, than our Souls do. It was therefore neceſſary that there ſhould be a ſurety

to undertake for us, that through ſupplies of Grace and Strength vouchſafed from him, we ſhall abide faithful in the Covenant to the end.

This was ſo much the more neceſſary, becauſe Man in Innocence, though he had ſufficient Power to have ſtood, and had no dead weight within to carry him down, no vicious Inclinations nor rebellious Affections to ſeduce him, yet he brake the firſt Covenent through want of ſuch Proviſion. Now it had not been agreeable to the Wiſdom of God, nor would it have anſwer'd his holy Ends, if he had entred into a New Covenant, deſign'd on purpoſe to relieve Man who had made himſelf miſerable by the breach of the Old one, had not this Door been ſecured at which the Enemy and the Deſtroyer had formerly broken in. When a Man who had a large Stock to ſet up, proves a Bankrupt, you don't need others to call you Fools, you will call your ſelves ſo faſt enough, if afterwards you ſhould lend him Money without good ſecurity, eſpecially while many of his old Debts ſtill hang about him. If Man in the greatneſs and fullneſs of his ſtrength did not ſecure himſelf, how could it be thought he ſhould do it in that weak, maimed and miſe-

miserably imperfect State, higher than which the best of Men do not arrive unto in this World.

Now upon all these four Accounts, because we are guilty, foolish and rebellious, suspicious, weak and treacherous Creatures, it was necessary there should be a Mediator and Surety for God's Honour, and for the securing our Duty, Peace and Happiness, and by the effectual securing of these, provide for his own Honour too: All which has been done by appointing Jesus Christ to be the Mediator and Surety of this Covenant.

For whereas we are *guilty* Creatures, the Covenant of Grace is founded on the Blood of one who was God and Man, who by his Death hath satisfied Divine Justice, and born the Curse of the broken Law, and thereby effectually purchased saving Blessings for us; and by his powerful Intercession, prevails with the Father actually to bestow them upon us, without which he would never have cast a favourable Eye toward us, nor have open'd the hand of his Mercy to us, notwithstanding the Infinite Benignity of his Nature, the Love which as our Creatour, he bears to the work of his own hands, and the respect he hath to Souls as the Father of Spirits. Next

to the dreadful Sentence of never extending any Mercy at all to us; that not ſo much as one drop of his Heavenly Dew ſhould ever fall upon us; next to that I ſay, this is the moſt effectual Method he could have taken to convince us how very deeply he reſents the ſins of Men, that he will not be gracious to 'em but upon the Interpoſition of the higheſt Favourite in Earth or Heaven it ſelf: yea not to his meer Importunity; Prayers and Tears alone could not prevail for us, but a moſt Shameful, Painful and Accurſed Death muſt be undergone by Him in our room and ſtead; and Divine Bleſſings come ſwimming down to us in the ſtreams of his Bloud. What could God have done more to fill us with a deep ſenſe of his amazing Greatneſs, unſpotted Holineſs, and flaming Juſtice? What more apt method could he have taken to ſtrike an awe of himſelf into the Breaſts of Men, that they no more offend for the *future*, as well as fill 'em with hopes of pardoning their *former* follies. There's a Majeſty in his Countenance, even while he ſmiles, and a dread in his looks, even while he ſits upon a Throne of Grace.

And

And whereas we are *Foolish*, *Rebellious* and *Suspicious* Creatures, what could God have done more to melt down our Spirits, overcome our Obstinacy, and scatter our unbelieving Doubts and Fears, than appointing Christ to be the Mediator and Surety of the Covenant, who is God-man; who is endued with infinite Knowledge and Power: whose flaming Eye doth see every fainting Spirit, and whose almighty Hand can bind up every bleeding Soul: whose Grace can as easily triumph over the most obstinate Sinner, as Light does over blackness of Darkness: who knows all the ways of Address to a Soul, and can turn all the Wheels within in a gentle and easie as well as powerful manner. Who has the compassion of a *Man*, (and such a one too who knows by Experience what Misery means more than any one ever did) and the Mercies of *God* as well as the Bowels of a Man united together. Who by his own Bloud has ratified and confirmed the Covenant. Who is exalted on purpose to *bestow Repentance and Remission of sins*: To be as a publick Fountain of Grace, *that from his Fulness we might receive and Grace for Grace, and hath power given him over all Flesh*; yea, over Earth and Heaven, all Things and Persons, both above and below, the Angels themselves not excepted,

to beſtow Pardon and eternal Life on all thoſe who believe on him. One whoſe delight it is to lift up a periſhing Creature from the Pit of Deſtruction, and bring back a loſt Sheep, a ſtrayed Soul to God; for this was part of the Prize for which he ran, one great branch of the *Joy that was ſet before him*, for the ſake whereof he *endured the Croſs*; *deſpiſing the ſhame* and torment of it. *If thou kneweſt the gift of God*, ſaid he to a Woman who was an infamous Sinner, of a vile and lewd Character, and who refuſed him a Cup of cold Water; yet if thou *kneweſt the Gift of God*, ſaid he, *thou wouldeſt have asked of him*; and upon thy ſo doing *he would have given thee living Water.*

Hereby a moſt effectual Courſe has been taken to raiſe our Hope and Comfort, and to ſecure our Obedience too. For exeſſive Fear brings a Man into the condition of *Lot*'s Wife; makes 'em flee from God firſt, and then transforms them into a Piller of Salt, that they are not able to move Hand or Foot; and Deſpair turns *Men* into Devils, who madly fight and rage againſt God, becauſe they have no hope.

And whereas we are *Weak*, *Treacherous*, and *Deceitful* Creatures, what more proper Method could have been taken to prevent a Revolt, than appointing him who

who is every way ſo able and willing, inviolably to hold us to the Terms of the Covenant required on our part; one ſo abundantly qualified for that high Poſt of Honour and Truſt, wherein his Father hath placed him.

Now ſeeing theſe things are ſo, it would be needleſs laborioufly to ſhew, that all this makes exceedingly for the Glory of Chriſt. This follows of Courſe. It muſt needs be a mighty Honour to him, to be the Center of Union between God and Man, Heaven and Earth meeting together in him. For which very reaſon he is ſo high and precious in the eſteem of God, Angels and Men. And when all, who thro' him have been brought into Covenant with God, and enabled to keep it to the end, ſhall meet together in one Body, and be by him preſented before the Throne of his Father, *He will be admired, and glorified in 'em.* Every one in the Heavenly Choir, from the loweſt Saint to the higheſt of all the Angels, ſhall ſound forth Hallelujahs to him, and his Praiſes ſhall be ſung by the whole heavenly Hoſt for ever and ever.

To Conclude.

1. Labour rightly to underſtand the Nature of the Covenant of Grace. 'Tis a Subject fit and worthy to be ſtudied not

only by Divines, but by Private Chriſtians alſo. 'Tis a weighty Point of common and of the higheſt Concern; for by vertue of it we claim Eternal Life.

2. Admire the Wiſdom and Grace of it. Particularly as to the Mediator and Surety of it, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. In order thereunto ſtudy God, Chriſt and your ſelves, and then you will admire it.

3. Labour after an Intereſt in him, and clear it up to your own Souls. This will bear up your ſinking Spirits under the heavieſt Calamities. Come what will, if you have a Lot and Portion in him, you can never be miſerable; but are in better Circumſtances when at the loweſt, than the wealthieſt Man, or the greateſt Monarch upon Earth, tho' he were an Univerſal one. Under all your ſorrows you will have reaſon to ſay, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath bleſſed us with Spiritual*, and therefore will bleſs us with Temporal and Eternal ones *in Heavenly places in Chriſt*, to whom be *Glory and Dominion for ever and ever*, Amen.

SERM.

SERMON III.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made with me an everlaſting Covenant, order'd in all things and ſure: for this is all my ſalvation and all my deſire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THE Point I have made ſome entrance upon from theſe Words is this, *viz.*

Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Intereſt in it will ſupport a Man under the moſt afflictive Evils, whither Perſonal or Family ones.

I have open'd the *Nature* of this Covenant; and waving others, have pitch'd upon this particular *Property* of it, that 'tis wiſely and well *order'd in all things.* I have explained the meaning of the Phraſe, and begun to prove the Truth, by ſhewing you that the Covenant of Grace is well order'd.

1. With

(1.) With reference to the Mediator and Surety of it. I now proceed to shew the same,

(2.) As to the *Blessings* of it. Now these do respect either *Us*, or *Ours*, according as the Covenant runs, *I will be a God to thee and to thy Seed.* The latter of these I shall wave in this Treatise, and confine my Discourse wholly to the former, *viz.* The Blessings as promised to *grown* Persons which are of three sorts.

Spiritual,
Eternal,
Temporal.

I begin with the First of these, *viz. Spiritual* Blessings; because the main difficulty and the great stress of all lies here. For the comfort of Temporal, and the enjoyment of Eternal Blessings, depend upon our being made partakers of *Spiritual* ones; which are *Special Grace*, *Justification*, *Adoption*; and then as the result of these, *Communion with God*, *Peace of Conscience*, and *Joy in the Holy Ghost*, which are like a few Blossoms of the Tree of Life, dropt down from the heavenly Paradise, whose fragrant smell is very reviving to a weary drooping Soul. Now I
Job. 18.4. shall endeavour to prove as to all of these, that the Covenant is well *order'd*, *i. e.* con-

contrived with the greateſt aptitude effectually to promote the Glory of God, the Honour of Chriſt, the Duty, Comfort and Happineſs of Men. For the proof of which conſider,

I.

I. How Matters ſtand as to the Promiſe of the *Firſt ſpecial ſaving* Grace: The promiſe of a *new Heart*, and a *new Spirit, writing the Law in our inward parts*, which is the Seed, Root, or Principle of Repentance and Faith, which two are the initial Terms of the Covenant, upon the performance whereof, we are brought internally and ſpiritually within the Bond of the Covenant. This being a matter of moment and difficulty, I will open it in the following Particulars.

1. The promiſe of the firſt ſpecial Grace is not Conditional ſtrictly and properly ſpeaking; but may be called Abſolute, provided it be rightly underſtood. If it were *Conditional, ſtrictly and properly ſpeaking*, the Condition muſt be, I ſuppoſe, the right uſe of Men's natural Faculties, ſerious attendance upon the Ordinances, and ready Compliance with the Motions of the Spirit, as well as humble Prayer to God. Whence it would follow, that all theſe were neceſſary at *all times* and in *all caſes*, for the obtaining of renewing Grace; and that God has tied up himſelf from ever beſtowing it upon any who neg-

neglect or abuse these. Now this is contrary to Experience. For he has been sometimes *found of them that sought him not*, and met those who were running away from him. St. *Paul* is an eminent Instance of this, who *Blasphem'd* the Name of Christ, and *compell'd* others so to do, was exceeding *mad* with rage, *breathing* forth Bloud and Slaughter against the Disciples of Christ; and yet we know who turn'd him when he was traveling upon so very wicked a design. He was matter as ill prepared for the illapses of the Spirit, as *Elijah's* Sacrifice for drawing down Fire from Heaven upon it, after it had been drencht in Water over and over. But O the riches of Soveraign Grace! Christ shot this Bird of Prey *Flying*, while he was on the Wing, hastening with the swiftness and cruelty of an Eagle to devour his Followers; and in the twinkling of an Eye brought him down almost dead at his Foot, crying out, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*

I do not therefore assert, that the Promise of the first special Grace is *Conditional strictly and properly speaking*. Let it pass for *Absolute*; but then let that be rightly understood. 'Tis not *so Absolute* as to render needless the use of God's appointed *Means* for obtaining the said Grace. As is most evident from Reason and Scripture.

ture. From *Reason.* Why does God appoint Means? sure not to be neglected, but to be diligently used in order to attain the End. From *Scripture* too. We find in *Ezekiel's* Prophecy, a promise of the first saving Grace as Absolute as any in the whole Book of God. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you*, &c. Chap. 36. 26, 27. But is this Promise so Absolute, as to render the use of Means on our part altogether needless for the fulfilling of it? No. The contrary is plainly laid down in the following words, *Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for all this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.* V. 37. And if Prayer be requisite, the use of all other proper Means is so too; for to use the one and neglect the other, is not to pray to God but to mock and affront him to his Face while we bow the Knee before him.

2. The Members of the visible Church have considerable Helps and Means for obtaining this first special Grace. They have outward and inward ones: *Outward* ones; for they enjoy the Gospel, which in contradistinction from the Jewish Dispensation (tho' that too was a Religion from Heaven) is called the *Ministration of the Spirit*: and they have the advantage of a standing Ministry, and the publick Preaching of God's holy Word.

They

They have also *Inward* Helps: the use of Reason and power of Consideration, which has a mighty force in it when awaken'd by the great Truths of the Scriptures, and stirr'd up by the kindly Motions of the Spirit. They have many an Arrow of Conviction, many a Pang of Fear, many a Beam of Light, many sparkling Desires, flashy Purposes, slight Tastes, and sweet Reliſhes of the Word of God, and feel the powers of the World to come: So that sometimes they will tremble like a Leaf in a windy day, weep like a Cloud in a rainy Season, melt like Snow before the warm Sun; and are brought on to the very Borders of the Kingdom of God.

Now these Means and Helps have a *tendency* towards special Grace; for otherwise they could not be call'd *Helps and Means of* Grace (They are sure, *very odd Helps, and very unaccountable Means, which do not at all lead towards the end*) Otherwise it would be absurd to give Men *Directions* in order to Regeneration; and these Directions among others, *viz.* That they should consider and shew themselves Men, Pray, Read, attend on the publick Preaching of the Word, and no more rebel against Conscience or the Spirit, *&c.* which yet are the common Prescriptions given by all sorts of Divines; and very wholsome ones they be.

Briefly.

Briefly. Every Man under the Goſpel hath this *day of Grace*; a day it is with reſpect to Light and Influence from Heaven. If this be wickedly ſinn'd away, then they have outlived all poſſibility of Converſion. It was poſſible therefore *before* this day of Grace ended, that they might have been converted. Otherwiſe I know not what Senſe to make of thoſe awful Words of our Saviour, where ſpeaking of the righteous Judgment of God upon obſtinate Sinners, he ſaith, *that ſeeing they may ſee and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not underſtand, leſt at any time,* (*i. e.* any time after this heavy doom was pronounced upon 'em) *they ſhould be converted.* Why, then they might have been ſo before. When this day is gone, the *things that belong to Men's peace are hid from their Eyes*; therefore *till then* they were not ſo. Hence it follows. Mark 4.

3. That if thoſe Men who have ſuch Helps and Means, die without ſaving Grace it is their *own Fault.* A fault I ſuppoſe it will be granted to be. (For we are commanded to *make to our ſelves new Hearts and new Spirits*; and tho' we are not able to do this, yet we are righteouſly bound to it; and that ſo much the rather, becauſe we are directed whither to apply our ſelves, even to one who is able

able and willing to do it for us.) Now if it be a *Fault* to live and dye without renewing Grace, only desiring Men to beware of Blasphemy, I would ask *whose Fault it is but their own?* Says *Moses* to the Israelites, such and such Methods have been tried with you, *and yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see and ears to hear unto this day.* 'Tis plain from the Context, that these words are brought in, not to roll of the blame on God, but to fix the reproach of it upon themselves; not to excuse, but to aggravate their sin and folly. *The* Lord *hath not given you an heart to perceive to this day.* 'The Lord who is so very gracious, so ready to give, who is so nearly related to you, who are his professed peculiar People, and have his Word and Ordinances set up among you, and who hath tryed so many different Methods to reclaim you; yet *this LORD* has not given such a heart to you to this day: Which is a plain Argument against you that you are a very wicked, stubborn, perverse Generation; or else *such a Lord* as he *would have given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear* long e'er this.

Deut. 25. 4.

4. No Man knows when these Helps and Means shall be withdrawn; This day of Grace shall end. God says, *To day if*

you will hear his Voice, harden not your hearts. And he hath not promis'd that he will wait for our Resolutions till to morrow comes. He hath given us no assurance, that if so much as one Sermon be despised, or one motion of his Spirit be baffled and quench'd, we shall have a second. We are apt to think, it may be, that if Men knew which would be the *last* Call or Motion that ever they should have, it would have been better; for then doubtless they would yield a ready compliance with it.

And we judge foolishly in this matter. For *extraordinary* Methods must have been taken to have inform'd Men of this. Either it must have been by an audible *Voice* from Heaven, or by *Revelation* to his Prophets, or by præter-natural *Impulses and Suggestions* to the Spirit of every Man in particular. But what reason is there for any of these? That God should take such Methods as are not very proper to be used with Reasonable Creatures? However, that he should go out of his usual Road, act in such extraordinary methods meerly for the reclaiming of obstinate Sinners, who will not be won upon by his own stated appointed Means which he hath so wisely setled; and do Miracles every day for the saving perverse Sinners from that ruin they are madly and inflexi-

bly bent upon. Probably it would do no good if he ſhould. Men are not ſo forward to believe the Warnings and Threatnings of God, but that if he told e'm this is the *laſt* Summons; they would vainly flatter themſelves that ſtill they ſhould have more. They would perſwade themſelves, and one another, that if ſuch a thing were intimated to them by a *Voice* from Heaven, or by an inward *Impulſe* on their own Spirits, that this was but a fancied Sound, a black Vapour, a melancholly Fancy; as now they do with reference to thoſe Fears and Convictions which they have lain under, when once they are paſt, and return to their Health and jovial Companions. And if *Miniſters* in God's Name ſhould tell 'em this, they would ſay theſe were only the idle Sayings of a pack of ſowr and morals Wretches, who under a pretence of blowing the Goſpel Trumpet, are delighted to fright Men perpetually with falſe Alarms, and torment 'em by repeating the diſmal Dreams of their own crazed Heads, and ſickly Imaginations; as they now ſay when we lay before them the ſevere Threatnings of the Word. They would ſtill vainly promiſe themſelves farther Warnings from the boundleſs Mercy of God as now they do. Chriſt himſelf tells us, *Luke* 16. 31. That extraordinary, even miraculous Methods

thods will do no good where the usual ordinary Means of Grace have no success. And as this would answer no *good* End, so it would naturally tend to every *evil* one thro' the Corruption of Human Nature. For Men would then say (what they now do, but then with more Reason) 'tis time enough yet: So much yet we have good: We may safely venture a little longer, for there are yet so many Motions of God's Spirit behind which we shall have, tho' these be quench'd. But God would not have one of the Calls of his Word, Entreaties of his Embassadors, so much as one of the strivings of his Spirit neglected or resisted; nor is it fit any one of them should. He would not tempt Men to do so by giving them promises of another; but would quicken us immediately to hearken, by leaving us at an utter uncertainty whither the present, if refused, shall not be the only one, yea the very *First* be also our *Last*. But yet,

5. He is not wont to be very quick, hasty and sharp upon Men. He usually waits long, strives much, deals often with Sinners before he abandons 'em; and then too he leisurely withdraws, that Men by feeling themselves a dying by little and little, may bethink themselves before it be too late. The motions of the Spirit are like the curling Circles in the Water,

which by degrees grow weaker and fainter, and 'tis ſome time ere the wrinkled Face of the Stream becomes even and ſmooth again. *How long ye ſimple ones will ye love ſimplicity? you have ſet at naught all my Counſels, and deſpiſed all my reproofs.* Which ſhews that the Holy Ghoſt had waited on 'em a conſiderable time, been frequently and very ſeriouſly dealing with 'em, but all in vain. Hereupon,

Prov. 1. 22.

6. 'Tis juſt and righteous in God to deny theſe Men his ſpecial ſaving Grace. 'Tis righteous in him to withdraw his *common* Grace, which has been ſo highly abuſed by 'em. Now if it be juſt to take away the ſmaller, it can't but be ſo not to vouchſafe 'em that which is vaſtly greater, *viz. ſpiritual* Grace.

Every wicked Man's own Conſcience preaches this Doctrine to him when he is ſober and ſerious in a more convincing manner than I am able to do. I appeal to my *Brethren*, yea, to my *Fathers* in the *Miniſtry*, whither ever they met with any one awaken'd Sinner, that on his Death-bed ſaid in a ſullen manner, *If God had given me as much Grace as he gave my Neighbour, I had been as good as he, and it was owing to God that I went without it. He would not give it me, and I could not wreſt it out if his Hands; and therefore 'tis his fault, and not mine.* I know indeed that

that Men will diſpute boldly, and prate ſaucily, when they have got a few *odd Notions*, and a great deal of *Wine* in their Heads. For when the Veſſel is full, the Froth will run over at the Mouth. But on their Death-bed they ſing another Song. When the Fire is kindled in their Boſoms, then the Bells ring backwards. How often would God have *gather'd me, but I would not be gather'd? purged me, but I would not be purged? I would none of him. I rejected his offers, ſlighted his counſels reſiſted his motions: Ah fool, wretch, mad-man that I was, I wickedly forſook him, and was righteouſly forſaken by him, and given up to the luſts of my own heart.*

7. 'Tis rich, free, ſoveraign Mercy, if the firſt ſaving Grace be given to ſome, when 'tis righteouſly denied to others. All have deſerved to go without this heavenly Treaſure; for all have ſinned againſt lower and common Grace. If therefore it be denied to ſome, 'tis an act of Juſtice; they receive within themſelves that black recompence that is meet, due to 'em and deſerved by 'em. If it be vouchſafed to others who are as unworthy, or it may be more ſo, 'tis an act of Grace. But if both theſe ſorts of Men be conſider'd *relatively* and *comparatively*, why is it given to this Man, but denied to that? 'Tis an inſtance of Soveraignty.

Such acts of God as these are like some artificial *Fire-works* which you have sometimes seen upon extraordinary occasions; they have some *Capital* Letters of God's Name, together with a *Crown*; I mean Justice and Mercy, and Royal Soveraignty shining with such a flaming brightness, that he who has Eyes to see can't choose but discern and read 'em. This Man has no reason to murmur or complain, nor that Man to boast and swell. The bloud of the one must be on his own Head, but the Crown must not be set on the Head of the other. All Men must say, *'Tis not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy; who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion; and whom he will he hardens*; because they first hardned themselves, made themselves Vessels of Wrath, duly fitting themselves for destruction; which at first advances slowly, but at length comes swiftly upon them.

8. Lastly, If a Man be serious, these Promises of the first Grace give great encouragement for Hope, Prayer and other Endeavours. For they are the promises of *God*, the rich Streams of whose Bounty flow every where: Promises of the *New Covenant* or the *Gospel*, which is the Ministration and Vehicle of the Spirit:

Pro-

Promiſes made (ſay ſome) to *Chriſt*; or (ſay others) to *the Catholick Church*; but others more probably think to *both* Chriſt and his Church as one myſtical Body, conſiſting of Head and Members; declaring God's purpoſe that Chriſt ſhall have a new Generation to ſerve him, and the Church a freſh ſupply of living Members from Age to Age. And why may they not be fulfilled upon thee? There's the more hope, if thy Heart does but begin to relent. In other matters Men don't ſtand upon certain Aſſurance; but meer probable Hope is the great Engine that turns the World, and is ſufficient to make 'em very induſtrious in their earthly Affairs. There's much more ground for it in thy caſe, if the Spirit of God breath upon thee, and hath any way inclined thy Soul to look out after ſpiritual Mercies. Fall down therefore in the duſt, and plead with God as a Man, as a reaſonable Being, and a Lover of thy ſelf. "O thou Father of Mercies, pity thy own "Creature, who on his bended Knees, "with Eyes and Hands lifted up to Hea-"ven, humbly implores thy help, with-"out which I muſt ſhortly be in Hell; "and O how ſhall I bear that Vengeance "of thine for ever, the thoughts whereof "I cannot now endure. Thou haſt plant-"ed a natural Love in all Beings toward

" their young ones that deſcended from
" 'em, the Oſtrick only excepted, which
" in thy holy word for that very reaſon
Job. 39. 14. " is branded as a very ſilly Creature. *Now*
" *he that formed the Eye, ſhall not he ſee?*
" *He that made the Ear, ſhall not he hear?*
" Pity, O pity me, for my Soul is thine
" own *Off-ſpring*, O thou *Father of Spi-*
" *rits! Men that are Evil, know how to*
" *give good things to their Children.* Deny
" not thy holy Spirit to me who am thy
" Child by Creation, and deſire to be
" ſo by Regeneration and Adoption.
" Thou feedeſt young Lions and Ravens
" when they cry to thee; and is not a
" Soul worth more than many Millions of
" them? Suffer not then my immortal
" Soul to be ſtarv'd and famiſht that rati-
" onally hungers and thirſts after thy
" Righteouſneſs. For 'tis the life of that
" Soul that I ask at thy Hands. Thou
" waſt pleaſed with *Solomon*, when wa-
" ving Riches and long Life, he as'd for
" civil Wiſdom *to go in and out before the*
" *People.* Be not angry with me ſinful
" Duſt and Aſhes, who cry to thee for
" ſpiritual Underſtanding, not to rule
" others, but to govern my ſelf and obey
" thee. O bleſſed Jeſus, thou moſt com-
" paſſionate lover of Souls, who cameſt
" down from thy Throne of Glory to a
" Croſs of Infamy and Pain in obedience

" to

" to thy Father's Command, and in com-
" pliance with thy own tender pity to
" periſhing Creatures; aſſert thine own
" Right, claim thine own Purchaſe, ſet
" thy Mark upon thine own Goods, dear-
" ly bought by thee, but wickedly ſtolen
" and violently withheld from thee. A
" Sinner indeed I am; otherwiſe I had
" not needed the help I crave, no more
" than they that are well and whole do
" the Phyſician. What wilt thou do with
" the Treaſures of thy healing Grace, if
" thou wilt not beſtow them upon thoſe
" that are ſick? To what end did it *pleaſe*
" *the Father that all Fulneſs ſhould dwell*
" *in thee*, but for the ſupply of thoſe that
" are empty? Thou cameſt *not to call the*
" *Righteous*, but Sinners to Repentance:
" Thou waſt exalted to beſtow Repen-
" tance on ſuch, that they might not miſs
" of Remiſſion. A great and a vile Sin-
" ner indeed I am. But *where Sin has*
" *abounded, Grace will much more abound.*
" The more ſeemingly deſperate the Caſe
" of the Patient is, the more will the ad-
" mirable Skill of the Phyſician, and the
" excellency of his healing Remedies ap-
" pear and be magnified. Thy Spirit is
" wont to preſs into thoſe Hearts that are
" ſhut againſt it; don't deny him to one
" who now begins to open to receive him
" (which yet he could not have done

" with-

" without thee) panting and gaſping af-
" ter, and longing to draw the Breath of
" Life from thee. Thou haſt raiſed theſe
" Deſires, and I beſeech thee to gratifie
" 'em; for ſurely thou didſt not kindle
" this Flame that thy poor returning Crea-
" ture might be tormented in it. Thy
" Rain falls, and thy Sun ſhines on the
" Wilderneſs as well as on the fruitful
" Field: Let the Dew of thy heavenly
" Grace fall down upon a thirſty Land
" and a barren Heath, even this wretched
" Heart of mine, that Herbs may grow
" there meet for thee, and at once give
" Grace to me and Glory to thy own
" Name, *Amen*, and *Amen*.

Take up words in thy Mouth, and plead after ſome ſuch manner as this. For is there not hope? Try what may be done. But then ſee thou do not contradict thy own Prayers, by a ſloathful neglect of the means of Grace, or further wicked Rebellion againſt the Spirit. And then go and learn what theſe Scriptures mean,

Prov. 2. 3, 4, 5. *If thou crieſt after Knowledge, and lifteſt up thy Voice for Underſtanding: If thou ſeekeſt her as Silver, and ſearcheſt for her as hidden Treaſures; then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God: For the Lord giveth*

Prov. 1. 23. Iſa. 55. 3. *Wiſdom. Turn ye at my reproof and I will pour out my Spirit upon you. Incline*

your

your Ear and come unto me; hear and your Souls shall live, and I will make an everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure Mercies of David.

So much for that first Point of the first special Grace.

II. That the Covenant is well *order'd* with respect to the spiritual Blessings of it will further appear, because therein Provision is made, that the Principle of saving Grace where 'tis once bestowed, shall never totally or finally fail. Not but that Grace in it self is a *loseable* thing. The Heavenly Plant is so weak and feeble, and the Ground is so soft and yeilding, and at best hangs so loosely about its tender Roots, that it would be presently plucked up by an easie Hand, were it not for the Almighty Power of God, wherewith 'tis covered and defended. For the Covenant, as my Text tells you, is *everlasting* and *sure*; God will *never turn away from the doing 'em good*; his *loving kindness he will not utterly take from 'em, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail*: And to prevent a total Rupture on their side, one of the Articles of the Covenant which he has undertaken for is this, that he will *put his fear into them that they shall not depart from him.* And if they do straggle, he will reclaim 'em from the wrong Steps they

II.

Jer. 32. 39, 40. Psal. 89. 30, &c.

they take, by his merciful and reasonable Chastisements of 'em for their Folly and Wandring.

Nor is this to be evaded by saying, that hereby is meant not the *Infallibility of the Event*, but only the *Intent and Design of God*, to incline and dispose them to persevere, which after all may be frustrated and take no effect, thro' the perverseness of the voluble Will of Man: as will appear if you do but observe how the Apo-
Heb. 8. 7, 8, 9. stle brings in this Promise. For speaking of that Covenant which God had made with *Israel* when he brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*, he says, God *found fault* with it, and therefore makes a new one: And this was the fault he found with it, that those with whom it was made, *continued not* in it, and thereupon, saith he, *I regarded them not.* Now in direct opposition hereunto, God promises to enter into a *new* Covenant with his People, that should be so contrived as not to have that Imperfection in it; but it should be such a one, that the Knot should be tied so fast between him and them, as never to be undone again, but the Relation should always remain.

III. This Covenant promiseth initial Repentance and Faith, and assures us of the acceptance and reward of sincere, tho' but

but weak and mean Services. Of which I ſhall treat hereafter, when I come to diſcourſe of the Terms of the Covenant.

IV. It promiſes continued and renewed Pardon, and ſtanding Peace with God and Conſcience, notwithſtanding ſins of Infirmity (truly ſo called, if heartily bewailed and ſeriouſly oppoſed.) Theſe ſhall no more keep off the light of God's Countenance, than Motes that flye up and down in the Air darken the Heavens, or keep off the Beams of the Sun.

V. Tho' it don't promiſe ſtanding Comfort to holy Men that commit wilful heinous Sins, yet it promiſes renewed Pardon of them upon renewal of their Faith and Repentance.

This I will open in both the Branches of it.

1. It don't promiſe ſtanding Comfort to holy Men that commit wilful heinous Sins. We had need to have a care what we do; for our God will not be mocked.

There's no ſafe playing with the Thunder of Heaven. A ſingle act of ſuch a Sin may break our Peace, darken our Souls, terrifie our Conſciences, and make miſerable work within while we live, and when we come to dye too.

But yet,

2. If

2. If a Man has been guilty of such Follies, the Covenant promiseth renewed Pardon upon the renewal of his Repentance and Faith. Tho' he hath forgotten himself, let him remember Christ; For *if any Man sin* we have him as *our Advocate with the Father*; and *if we confess* and forsake our Sins, God *is just and faithful to forgive 'em*. Such a Man's Condition, so humbling himself, will be safe, tho' it may be very uncomfortable for a long time: And therefore God usually makes it uncomfortable, that it may be safe. For the Hidings of God's Face, Frowns of Providence, and Stings of Conscience are the usual Methods to recover such a Man, and constrain him to renew his Faith and Repentance, that they may not fail, and so his Soul may not be lost for ever: As Thunder clears the Air of those malignant Vapours which otherwise would be the cause of many mortal Diseases. And this Consideration alone is sufficient to wipe off that Aspersion that is wont to be cast on the Doctrine of *Perseverance*, *viz.* That it opens a wide Gap to loose and careless walking. We must not take Truths in their *single* Aspect, but in their *Connection*. The Hand of a Man chopt off is a very unpleasing, frightful sight, tho' it looks very amiable as united to the Body. There is the *Grace*, but then there

there is the *Rod* of the Covenant too. God promises Perseverance; but withal he severely threatens wilful Declinings, which will cause very sharp Pains, tho' care will be taken they shall not *de facto*, issue in Death. He *will not utterly take away his loving kindness*, but the *Sense* of it he will; such Iniquities will he *visit with a Rod*, and such *Transgressions with a Stripe*. He will do the latter, because he will not, and that he may not do the former.

VI. Lastly, The Covenant does promise conditional Grace, to preserve us from *such* Sins, and inward Peace (ordinarily) if we thereby keep our selves from 'em. My meaning is, that there are many Duties required at our Hands, *viz.* That we Watch and Pray, stand upon our Guard, and not run our selves into Temptation, that we stir up the Grace of God, and walk in the Spirit, that we trust in God and carry it humbly, *&c.* Which if we do, *he will give more Grace*, and keep us from those vile Sins, that waste our Consciences and break the peace of our Souls: The further Supplies of the Spirit in order thereunto being given forth as a gracious Reward, when we do these things; and with-held as a just Punishment when we neglect 'em. Daily experience testi- VI. *Owen on* 130 *Psal.*

teſtifies the truth of this. Do but ask the People of God when they have been overtaken with ſuch Faults, how did this come about? Says one, I neglected Morning Prayer; I went out Faſting, whereupon the ill Scents affected my Head, and ſo I ſtagger'd and fell. Another will tell you, It was with me as with *Hezekiah*, when his Heart was lifted up; wherefore *God left him to himſelf*, whereupon the *ſwelling of his Mind* was much more miſchievous to him than that of his Body; and he carried it as tho', like his own Sign which he choſe, he had been driven back (in Grace) as many Degrees as the Sun upon the Dial of *Ahaz*. A third will acknowledge, I ran my ſelf into Temptation, and ſo my Foot was caught in the Snare. I ventur'd near the Fire where I had nothing to do, not hearkening to the Warning that was given, and ſo on a ſudden I was blown up in the Air.

In a word, *abſolute freedom* from all Sin is not promis'd in this World: That's like an *high Hill* on the Right Hand, the top whereof a Saint cannot reach; 'tis far above him, tho' he look wiſhly towards it. *Total Apoſtacy* is provided againſt. That's a *ſteep Rock* on the Left Hand, down which he ſhall never fall. But then between theſe too, there's many a pleaſant Path on this ſide, and many a dangerous

gerous miry Hole on that; and we many times wander from the one, and tumble into the other, to the loss of our Innocence and Peace; and the Grace of God don't keep us, because we don't *keep our selves*, but neglect those Duties which are the Means and Conditions of receiving that Grace of his in order thereunto. Whereas were we not Faulty, we should enjoy liberal Supplies of it, and then for Holiness and Comfort, we should be like a Field that the Lord hath blessed, strongly fenc'd in from devouring Beasts, and flourishing under the clear Beams and the refreshing Dews of Heaven. 1 John. 4.

Thus have I shewn you, that the Covenant as to the Spiritual Blessings of it is well *order'd*, because excellent Provision is made therein for the Glory of God, the Duty, Comfort, and Happiness of Man. It will be needless to insist long on the proof of its being well *order'd* in the other respect, *viz.* That therein wise Provision is also made for the *Honour of Christ*. For all that *Grace* that any of us have from first to last, and all the several *degrees* of it, converting, exciting, strength'ning, preserving, recovering, supporting, chearing, comforting, ordinary or extraordinary, relative or real, is a Beam shot forth from this Sun of Righteousness, a Stream derived from this

Fountain, who purchaſed it for us, and conveys it to us, *in whom it pleaſed the Father that all fullneſs ſhould dwell*, as in a common Repoſitory, that ſo as *by his Poverty* ſo out of his Treaſures *we might be made rich.*

Wherefore 'tis obſervable, that St. *Paul* no leſs than ſeven times at the end of his Epiſtles, ſuppreſſing the name both of the *Father* and of the *Spirit*, wiſhes the Diſciples *Grace from Chriſt*, mentioning his Name alone. Yea, and St. *John* that great lover of Him, who lay in his Maſter's Boſom, ſhews that his Maſter lay very near his Heart, by cloſing the Bible with a paſſage to this purpoſe. The Canon of the Old Teſtament was ſhut up with this Memento, *Remember ye the Law of Moſes my Servant.* The Canon of the New Teſtament is cloſed up with theſe words, *The Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt be with you all Amen.* We often forget the beginning of a Book by that time we come to the end of it; but the *laſt* words that Men read, ſtick by 'em. *The Grace of our Lord Jeſus be with you*, are the very *laſt* words of the Bible, that whatever we forget, we may be ſure to remember this, how deeply we are indepted to him for all the Grace we either have or hope for.

Malach 4. 4.

Rev. 22. 21.

The *Uſe* of all is, to admire the *Wiſdom* as well as the Grace of the Covenant, to labour

labour after an Interest in it, and betake our selves to it under all our Afflictions. When our Spirits are ready to sink at the thoughts of those losses we have sustained, let us endeavour to raise 'em up again with such Thoughts as these, what tho' God has deprived me of my neerest Relations, and buried my dearest earthly Treasure under Ground, so that I shall see it no more, however he has given me more durable Riches, even his Grace and Peace. One half of my self is dropt into the Grave, and the other, by the weight of Diseases, as well as Inclination, is ready to fall after its dear Companion. But there is one Relation, *viz.* That between God in Christ and my Soul, that can never be broken off. Death it self that is too hard for all others, shall never break these Bands of Union. Tho' they fail me, when Breath failed them, tho' they leave me when God calls them away, yet *He* will never fail nor forsake. Wherefore *rejoice* O my Soul, *in the Lord, and again I say rejoice* in him who is *continually with thee, who will guide* thee *by his Counsels, and afterwards receive* thee *to Glory.* Amen, and Amen.

SERMON IV.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made with me an everlaſting Covenant, order'd in all things and ſure: for this is all my ſalvation and all my deſire, altho' he make it not to grow.

HAving ſhewn you from theſe Words, that the Covenant of Grace is wiſely and well *order'd* with reference to the *Mediator* and *Surety* of it; and the *Spiritual* Bleſſings contained in it: I now proceed to ſhow the ſame as to the *Eternal* ones in Heaven promiſed in it, and which God has prepared for his People in Heaven.

Now that as to *Theſe* the Covenant is wiſely and well *Ordered*, *i.e.* 'Tis ſo contrived as moſt effectually to attain the great Ends of that Covenant, *viz.* The ſecuring and diſplaying the Glory of God, the Honour of Chriſt, and promoting the Duty, Comfort, and Happineſs of Men,

will appear, if the four following Particulars be duly weigh'd.

I. I. The Greatneſs of that Eternal Happineſs.
II. II. The clearneſs and certainty of the Revelation and Promiſe of it.
III. III. The Method and Order of God in beſtowing it.
IV. IV. The different Meaſures and Degrees of it.

I. I. The greatneſs of that Eternal Bliſs which God has provided for his People in Heaven. That it ſhould be a very extraordinary one, will appear to be abſolutely neceſſary, if we conſider either

God
or
Them.

1. If we conſider GOD. Seeing he hath ſtooped ſo low as to enter into Covenant with them, their Meaneſs is not ſo much to be ey'd (if it were, he muſt never have entred into Covenant with 'em; or if he did, they could not rationally expect to receive any thing at all from him, they being *leſs than the leaſt of all his Mercies*) But God's own Infinite Majeſty, Greatneſs, and Goodneſs muſt be

be consider'd. He must act towards 'em like Himself; give them somewhat that is worthy of so mighty, so gracious, so glorious a Monarch as he is, and *make* 'em great by his Favours, seeing he does not *find* 'em so. Indeed the very Title he has assumed to himself, of being called *their God*, does naturally raise their Spirits and Hopes. He is the *God* of all in a *natural way*, as to Dominion and Soveraignty. But when 'tis said of any particular Body of *Men* by way of distinction from the rest of Mankind, that the Most High is *their God*, theirs in a *Federal* way, by vertue of a Covenant of Grace, this implies, that they have a special Propriety and Interest in him; whence it follows, that he has a transcendent love for them. For as the Apostle speaks, *Having no greater a one to swear by, he swears by himself:* So may I say, having no greater a Gift, he gives *Himself* to 'em, to be theirs in a very distinguishing way, which he would never have done, had they not been *accepted thro' his well-beloved.* For unless it be in and thro' his dear Son; for the sake of his meritorious Death and Sacrifice and powerful Intercession, fallen Creatures can have no special comfortable Interest in an infinitely just and holy God, nor can they be the Objects of his peculiar love and favour. But seeing

Heb. 6. 13

they are so by the bitter Passion, and powerful Recommendation of one so great, and so dear to the Father as He; hence it follows, that some very great and extraordinary Happiness shall one time or other be bestowed on 'em. For where-ever we have a special Interest in a very mighty one, and he has a special transcendent love for us, and are recommended to him by his most dearly Beloved, and intimate Relation and Friend, we do naturally and rationally conclude, that some time other he will certainly do very considerable things for us. And if God should never do so for his People, it would be a reproach to him to *raise* and then *mock* their Expectations. Now *nothing like* this is done for 'em in this World; 'tis therefore reserved for 'em in the next, where it shall be seen to the full, what an advantage it is to stand in a Covenant-Relation to him, whose Wisdom, Power, Love and Goodness, are Infinite and Eternal, all which are made over to them to be employed for them, and what all these taken in Conjunction can do, shall then and there be done for them. Otherwise the Expression that he is *their God*, would be like a big swelling Word of a great Sound, but no Sense at the bottom. Had they no better things than what they meet with here below,

God's

God's *Covenant* would be like the *Rainbow* (which he once choſe to be a *Sign* of it) curiouſly enamell'd indeed and beautified with variety of imaginary Colours, ſpringing from a mixture of Light and Shade, but in reality is no other than a dark and muddy Vapour that pleaſes the Eye, but then deceives the unwary beholder.

This will further appear, if you conſider,

2. The Covenant-People of God themſelves: Either their ſtate in this World, or the poſture of their Souls in reference to another.

(1.) Their ſtate in this World. Moſt of 'em enjoy but little, and ſuffer very much in it, and that becauſe of their Relation; yea, on *that account* they many times enjoy leſs and ſuffer more than others do, or than they themſelves otherwiſe would. He cuts them ſhort becauſe he is their God, and reſolves ſo to continue. He therefore keeps 'em low, leaſt earthly Proſperity ſhould make 'em careleſs in their Obedience to him, and weaken their delight in himſelf who is and will be their Ruler, that ſo he may be their chiefeſt Happineſs. Wicked Men perſecute and uſe 'em very hardly, becauſe they belong and reſolve to prove loyal and ſtedfaſt to him. They are true Sterling, and bear

bear his *Image* and *Superſcription* upon them; and therefore they are miſerably *clipt*, and ſometimes *melted down*: whereas were they Braſs or *Reprobate Silver*, they would not be ſo ſerved. They are daily wreſtling with ſtrong Corruptions and violent Temptations; groaning becauſe of the Imperfection of their Graces and Duties: are never quite out of all danger, and ſometimes under ſharp fears of falling into ſcandalous ſin. The ſight of other Men's Miſcarriages, (eſpecially if they are their near Relations) opens the ſprings of Sorrow, ſo that *Rivers of Tears run down their Eyes.* And they are often very uneaſiy in their own Minds, becauſe they are in the dark as to their Intereſt in God. All this would be no more matter of diſquiet to them, than 'tis to others, were it not for the good Principle within, ſuitable to the relation wherein they ſtand to him. If therefore there were no Heaven, the People of God would be Miſerable on *His* Account.

(2.) Conſider the Poſture of their Souls, with reference to Heaven.

1. This is the main Motive that allures them to lay hold on God's Covenant. 'Tis this that gives a value to all the other Bleſſings of the Covenant, whither Temporal or Spiritual; that they are Streams that iſſue in Heaven at laſt:

laſt: were it not ſo, the other Bleſſings would make 'em *more miſerable*: Of which more hereafter.

2. Nothing but ſuch an extraordinary Future Happineſs, ſuch as that of Heaven is, could keep 'em from breaking Covenant with God. The Perſecutions and Troubles of the World on one hand; and the Pleaſures and Delights of it on the other, are two mighty Engines, which Satan, a very ſubtil Adverſary, imploys to draw away their Hearts from God and his Service; And theſe things are preſent, and ſtrike ſtrongly upon our Senſes.

Now Holy Men do not perſiſt in their Fidelity, from a blind Neceſſity or a bruti ſh Inſtinct, or from Sullenneſs and Obſtinacy, Will and Humour. But from Divinely rational Grounds, they being governed according to their Make and Frame, by right Reaſon in ſubſerviency to the Influences of the Divine Spirit. The odiouſneſs of Sin in its own nature, and the native Beauty of Holineſs, tho' they are of uſe, yet like ſlender Cords, would be preſently broken by the violence of the Storm, and they be driven on the Rocks making Ship-wrack of Faith and a good Conſcience, were it not for the ſheet Anchor, caſt *within the Veil*. They could not in a rational way be kept

kept ſteady to him, but by the promiſe of a very extraordinary Happineſs, (ſuch as that of Heaven is,) that the exceeding greatneſs of it may compenſate for its being *Future and Inviſible*, and vaſtly out-weigh whatſoever Arguments drawn from preſent and ſenſible things may be offered to induce them to break their League with God.

Laſtly, Nothing but an extraordinary Happineſs hereafter can ſatisfie their Deſires, and prevent their Faintings under all their Labours and Trials. 'Tis this that is the Object of their Thoughts, their Faith, their Hope; which is their great Conſolation in every ſtate, more eſpecially in an Afflicted one; what they moſt earneſtly pant after. And the more Afflicted and Holy they are, the more do they long for it. Their Hearts would often fail, but that looking upwards, puts a new Life and Spirit into them. As if therefore they would prevent the *Angels* in their laſt kind Office which they are appointed to do for them, every day their Souls are carried up to Heaven in Holy longings and Fervent deſires. Thither do they flee upon the Wings of Faith, Love and Deſire, that ſo their Souls may be at reſt, for which they find no place here below. The Covenant therefore is wiſely *ordered*, becauſe ſo very Glorious

Glorious a Place is provided for all the Saints, without which, the main Article of the Covenant had been left out; the largeſt, by far the Richeſt Jewel in all the Crown, without which, the other little Gems and ſparkling Diamonds, (though now they are Additional Beauties) would have been of little weight or worth.

Remarkable to this purpoſe is that excellent paſſage of the Apoſtle, *But now they deſire a better Country, that is an Heavenly one; wherefore he is not aſhamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a City.* Heb. 11. 16. 'Tis *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* the Apoſtle ſpeaks of. The moſt High, ſaith he, *is not aſhamed, i. e.* he looks upon it as matter of Credit and Glory to him to be called *their God.* Now becauſe it might be asked, what ſhould be the ground of this? what ſort of Men were they? they had indeed their numerous Flocks and Herds; but herein they were vaſtly exceeded by the mighty Kings of *Egypt* and *Aſſyria*, who were Men of great Renown, who had greater *Droves* of Men than theſe Patriarchs had of Sheep, whoſe Subjects were as much their Property, whom they work'd, and fleec'd, and kill'd, and did eat up as freely, as they did their ſmaller number of Cattle. Yea, theſe Monarchs

ſerved

ſerved their Slaves worſe than ſo; they made them all meer Beaſts of Burden, and did at pleaſure Eat and Drink their very *Bloud*; whereas the Patriarchs did not do ſo by their Beaſts. It might have looked Big and ſounded Great, for the moſt High to have been ſtiled the God of ſuch mighty Emperors as theſe. But where is the Glory of ſtanding in ſo near a Relation to ſuch comparatively mean Perſons as *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*. Why, ſaith the Apoſtle, a moſt excellent *Spirit* was found in them; *for they deſire a better Country, that is, an Heavenly one*: And a moſt excellent *Reward* was provided for them, *For he hath prepared a City for them*. 'Tis the ſame Bleſſed Place, *viz. Heaven*, that the Apoſtle means by both thoſe words, a *Country* and a *City*. The Scripture ſets it forth to us by diverſe Notions and Compariſons drawn from things obvious to our Senſes, the great Inlets of Knowledge, the better to help our Underſtandings in our Conceptions of the Happineſs and Glory of it; and the one of theſe is added to the other, to prevent our entertaining the leaſt imagination of any defect in the Beauties of it, which we might have been tempted to, if one word alone had been made uſe of. 'Tis repreſented as a *Country*, leſt if he had called it a

City

City only, we ſhould think it too ſtraight a place, where we ſhould have been incommoded for want of Room or Air as Men uſe to be in a great *City*. But then 'tis repreſented as a *City* too, which ſignifies not only a *Place* made up of Regular and Stately Buildings, where there's a great deal of excellent Company to ſuit every Man's *Genius*, plenty of all ſorts of Proviſions for Neceſſity and Delight too, where Men dwell together, converſe with, know and are in a capacity on all theſe accounts of helping each other. But the word ſignifies a *State* too, or *Polity*, where Men are united under an excellent Government have noble Privileges, and live in great Love and Concord. By this term of a *City* is Heaven ſet forth, leſt if he had called it a *Country* only, we ſhould think it was but as a mean Cottage, or a lonely place where Men live ſcatteringly from one another, as People in the *Country* do. This was the place which they looked after. They did not Live and Act like the Men of this World, whoſe *All* lies here below, in this place, which as a certain King is reported to have ſaid of this Iſland of ours, is but a Shovel-full of Earth caſt up in the midſt of the Sea. They were not ſuch ſhort-ſighted, and of ſo mean Spirits; they aimed higher, as high

high as Heaven, and looked much further than Time, even into Eternity. Nor did they pleaſe themſelves with Golden Dreams and vain Imaginations; for there really was ſuch a Place as they ſought after, provided for them.

And 'tis obſervable, that the middle clauſe of the verſe, *He is not aſhamed to be called their God*, is cloſely connected, both with the firſt and the laſt Clauſe of the Verſe too. With the firſt, by the Illative Particle *Wherefore*; and with the laſt, by the Cauſal Particle *For*. *They deſire a better Country, that is an Heavenly one*; wherefore *he is not aſhamed to be called their God*. Nor is there any reaſon on *his own* part no more than on *theirs* that he ſhould; *for he hath prepared for them a City*. Implying, that had it not been thus in *both* theſe reſpects, it would have been juſt matter of ſhame to him to have ſtood in ſo peculiar a relation to them; but now he may with a great deal of Honour to himſelf be called *their God*.

And if it would have been a Reflection upon him to be ſo ſtyled, if he had not provided a Heaven for *them*; much more would it be ſo to him to have been called the God of *other* Holy Men. For *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* were Rich Men, Courted by ſeveral Kings for their Allies; and were a ſort of

of petty Princes themſelves; whereas the generality of other holy Men, eſpecially under the Goſpel, were Poor when they became the Covenant Friends of God; or at leaſt were made ſo, becauſe of their Alliance with him.

II. That the Covenant of Grace is wiſely and well *ordered* as to the Eternal Bleſſings contained in it, will further appear, if we conſider the *clearneſs* and *certainty* of the Revelation and Promiſe of it. But now this muſt be underſtood of the laſt and beſt Edition of the Covenant of Grace, which we are now under. For in the former ones, the Saints have had but a glimmering knowledge of it. They ſeem for ſome Thouſands of Years to have but One promiſe of Heaven whereon to live; at leaſt we read of no other, *viz.* That he would be *their God*: whence indeed it may be proved, that there is a future Reward for them; but then this requires Thought and Labour, and is inferr'd by a long Chain of Inferences and Concluſions from it. II.

And there was good Reaſon for ſuch a Conduct. Chriſt had not then Suffer'd, nor was he Glorified. It was fit that the great Prophet ſhould come with the cleareſt diſcoveries, as of our Duty, ſo of

the great Promiſe, *viz.* that of Eternal Life; That his Coming might be more earneſtly longed for to ſet this and other Matters of moment in a clearer light, and be the more gladly welcomed when he did Appear. And becauſe it was the promiſe of Heaven that was to be the great Motive to win over Souls to him; and that in deſpight of the ſtrong Prejudices of his own Croſs, and thoſe bitter Sufferings which in thoſe early Days, were ſure to follow all thoſe that followed him; and which more or leſs will be the Portion of his ſincere Diſciples in all ſucceeding Ages; more eſpecially conſidering, that ſince his appearing Temporal Bleſſings are given forth with a more ſparing hand than formerly they were under the Old Teſtament Diſpenſation.

But we have no reaſon to complain on any of theſe accounts, for *Life and Immortality is ſo brought to light by the Goſpel*; 'tis ſo very often, ſo very plainly, ſo very particularly promiſed, we have ſuch an Aſſurance of it from the Oath of God, the Death of Chriſt, whereby the New Covenant is Ratified and Sealed, and by his ſo well atteſted Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, that there's no room left for Heſitation about it. But this I have

have at large Discoursed of else-where, and therefore shall add no more. *Vide Preservative against Deism.*

Wherefore

III. Let us consider the *Method* and *Order* of God in bestowing these Eternal Mercies. Which I shall speak to in these Four Particulars. III.

1. 'Tis not (usually) till after some time of painful Service and Suffering. There is indeed a considerable difficulty in this Point; considering that Men are fundamentally fitted and qualified for the work and reward of Heaven as soon as ever they are Born again. While they are kept out of it, they are subject to a great variety of sore Afflictions, liable to abundance of strong Temptations, daily groan under the dead weight of Corruption within, tremble at the thoughts and fears of one day or other falling by the Hand of *Saul*, to the wounding the Honour of God and Religion, breaking the peace of their Consciences, defiling their Souls, and endangering their Eternal Salvation. Their Graces are so imperfect, they are so unlike to God, that they are ashamed of themselves. Their Hearts are set upon Heaven, 'tis their Duty and their Character to long for it. Their desires after it are sometimes sharpned by their fore-tastes of it

in joyful Communion with God in their Closets and the Publick Assemblies ; whereupon they are ready to clap their Wings and flee away. And they would so much the rather desire to be gone at such a time, because as that Devout Man complained, 'tis *Rara hora; Brevis mora*, their Hearts are like a heavy Bell, 'tis but seldom and with great pains they are raised to so exalted a Pitch ; why then, O why does he not take 'em away in that *bright Minute*, but delay it till they flat and fall again ; and are not so desirous of it ? why does he not draw out their Breath while he is thus kissing them with the kisses of his Mouth, and take them up into his Bosom, when he hath thus Enfolded and Embraced them in the Arms of his Love? especially considering the endeared Affection that is between them and him ? their *Hope* thus *deferred makes their heart sick* ; but the granting the desires of mutual Lovers is, *as a Tree of Life.*

But all these difficulties will be removed, and the wise *ordering* of the Covenant in keeping Holy Men on the Earth for a Season, will appear if the following Particulars be considered.

(1.) Hereby the Divine Wisdom, Power, Faithfulness, Goodness and Grace do illustriously appear in the Conduct of Holy Men

Men through this World : In ſupplying their many daily Wants, ſtrength'ning, upholding, preſerving, recovering, and refreſhing their weary drooping Souls; carrying them ſafely thro' a thouſand threat'ning Difficulties and Dangers, in ſpight of all their numerous, potent, ſubtil and malicious Enemies, who are perpetually hovering about 'em, watching all Advantages to cut 'em in pieces. All which honour God would loſe, if in a Moment or two after their Converſion, they were tranſlated into the Seat of the Bleſſed.

(2.) Hereby there is ſufficient time for the trial and exerciſe of their ſeveral Graces. Some of 'em indeed, ſuch as love to God and Chriſt, are never brought to perfection till they reach Heaven. But this Earth is the only place where they can be *proved*. Others of 'em, Such as Faith, Repentance, Patience, Self-denial, weanedneſs from this World, Courage and Zeal for God, *&c.* are calculated meerly for the Meridian of this World, and muſt be acted here, or no where. They ſhall drop all their *Corruptions*, and ſhed ſome of their *Graces* too as they aſcend. They ſhall drop all their *Corruptions*. When theſe heavenly Plants are taken up out of this to be ſet in a better Soil, all the Filth and Mould that hangs about their Roots ſhall be entirely bruſht

off. They ſhall alſo part with many of their *Graces*. Several of theſe are like a rich embroider'd Garment, which while a Man is in a cold Climate, do adorn and warm him too; but muſt be laid aſide when he comes into a warmer Region, becauſe there it would be meer Cumber and Burden to him. So that theſe holy Principles, this divine Seed, would be ſown in their Hearts to no purpoſe, and God would have no Harveſt of Glory from 'em, were his People immediately caught up into Heaven. But this is wiſely defer'd for a ſeaſon upon another account, *viz.*

(3) That the World may be edified, and the Honour and Intereſt of God in it be promoted by 'em. The World indeed is not worthy of 'em, but it greatly needs 'em. And how ſad would it be with this Earth of ours, if holy Men, as ſoon as ever they were made ſo, ſhould immediately be hurried out of it. They muſt tarry for a Seaſon, that they may be a credit to him by the holineſs of their Lives, and ſhew by the brightneſs of their Example how uſeful an Inſtitution Chriſtianity is; that they may eſpouſe his Truth, bear up his Name, plead his Cauſe, do ſõme good, if not on their Enemies, however among their Friends, Relations and Acquaintance, and eſpecially among their Children and Servants; that new

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Tapers may be lighted at their Lamp before it goes out, leſt thereupon it be perfectly dark. And how much does the welfare of the Church and State; the Temporal, Spiritual and Eternal good of many Souls depend on the Life of one good *King*, one excellent *Miniſter*, one godly *Parent*? How great a weight does Providence ſometimes hang on one very ſlender Thread? All would fall to the Ground if that were broken.

'Tis true indeed, every Man's Life is not of ſo great Moment; nor is he capable of eminent Service. But there's no Man but what has at leaſt *one* Talent, if he has but a Heart to Trade with and improve it. Every little Fibre is of ſome uſe, tho' not of ſo noble a one, nor is it abſolutely neceſſary as the Vital Parts. Some Letters indeed there are in ſome Words that are uſeleſs, and don't contribute any thing towards the Pronunciation. But no Chriſtian need to be altogether inſignificant. The Apoſtle ſuppoſes, that the meaneſt Servant (and Servants in his time were meer *Slaves*, like the *Blacks* among us) might *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*; for to them is that Exhortation directed. Coloſſ. 3. 24.

And we have the leſs reaſon to regret our being continued for a ſeaſon in a place of Tryal and Service, becauſe till

we were ſavingly converted (and how long it was before we were ſo, is beſt known to God and our own Conſciences, and ſome of us have reaſon to be thankful that 'tis ſpread no further; but till then I ſay) we did not ſtrike *one true ſtroke.* We did much againſt God, but nothing for him. His Rule was not ſeriouſly minded, nor his Glory aimed at in any thingwe did, tho' good for the matter and ſubſtance of it. It may be for Years together we have lived in open Rebellion againſt God, and done a great deal of miſchief to our ſelves and the Souls of others. 'Tis fit we ſhould be continued on the Earth for ſome Years to groan under the penal Fruits and Effects of our own Follies, the better to heighten our Repentance, to undo as much as in us lies the Evil we have done, to ſnatch thoſe out of the Fire whom we have caſt in, or at leaſt to pluck others out; and by our good Converſation for a long time, effectually to convince them who knew our evil Manners, that we are changed indeed and become other kind of Men, than once we were, which they will not be very forward to believe.

And as for that Plea, Why does not God tranſlate holy Souls while they are in the midſt of their joyful Communion with

with him, and earnestly desirous to be gone: Whereas if he defer it, their Minds will alter. I would ask, must God's Work be broken off in the middle, and he be a sufferer because of his extraordinary kindness to us? Must we be *taken off* from Labour, because we have had great Refreshments? One would think that should rather be an Argument for our being continued than for being dismis'd from Service, which is so great a help to enable us to hold out the longer in it? His Harvest must stand still, or he be at the expence of a Miracle to raise up another to fill up our room, and stand in the Gap that our Laziness would make, for fear that otherwise we should be out of Humour.

(4) This is so order'd, that God may give Heaven to his People as a Reward. For so it is, according to that of the Apostle, *That ye may receive the Reward of the Inheritance.* 'Tis indeed the *Gift* of God, and the *Purchase* of Christ; but 'tis withal the *Reward* of our Labour: Not of *Merit* indeed but of *Grace*; and so it necessarily implies a respect to foregoing Services. Now we are too much in haste, if we are not willing to fight and conquer too before we have the Crown, and run the Race before we seize the Prize. Coloss. 3. 24.

These

Theſe Four Conſiderations ſhew the Wiſdom of God in the Method and Order of his beſtowing eternal Mercies, *viz.* Not till after ſome time of painful Service and Suffering; and the Vanity of thoſe Objections that are made against it; the weakneſs whereof I ſhall have occaſion to touch further upon in ſome of the following Particulars.

Therefore,

2. At the moſt 'tis not long before a Saint ſhall enter into Heaven. The Patriarchs indeed before the Floud, and quickly after it, waited a great many hundreds of Years. But there were peculiar Reaſons for it: That the Earth might be peopled: That Arts and Sciences neceſſary for the Comfort of Man's Life might be invented and improved: That the Divine Oracles might be handed down from Father to Son by Oral Tradition. For that moſt excellent of all Humane Inventions (if indeed it were a Humane, and not rather a Divine one, as many learned Men think) the Alphabet I mean, and Writing, were not then found out, or at leaſt were not employed for the conveying down Divine Truths. Theſe Reaſons are now ceas'd; and God not being willing his People ſhould be kept *ſo long* out of Heaven when there is not ſo much ground for it, Life is now ſhort-

ſhort'ned. And 'tis obſervable, that the Years of Man firſt began to be ſo about the time of *Moſes*, when the Will of God was firſt committed to Writing; the ſtandard of Humane Life continuing much the ſame to this day as it was then reduced unto. 'Tis a comfortable Text to a good Man, that *the days of our years are but threeſcore years and ten:* Or at the utmoſt ſtretch, but *fourſcore*, and it may be a few *Fractions* (for we muſt not talk of *whole* Numbers after that time) And it may be for a Reaſon that I need not mention, ſome of you are not willing it ſhould be exactly known how much of that time is already run out. I am ſure it would make ſome of us bluſh to think how much of it muſt be cut off and thrown away as entirely loſt, wherein we did nothing for God. Our *Morning* began in Darkneſs. How thick that was, and how long it laſted before we awaked out of ſleep, is beſt known to God and our own Conſciences; and we have it may be, great reaſon to be thankful that it is ſo. Making allowance for that, we may juſtly ſay, the *time is ſhort* for the trial of our Faith, Patience, and Long-ſuffering (which is but Patience drawn out to a little longer Thread) and then all the Glories of an everlaſting Heaven are ours,

3. This

3. This time of Service and Suffering is to us very uncertain, tho' it be before hand known unto God. Nothing is more uncertain than the Life of Men, tho' they are ever so young and hail. Even those whose Original *make* is so strong as to endure great Hardships, are often carried off by little Accidents and slight Diseases: Like Manna that was so firm as to bear the being pounded in a Mortar, or ground in a Mill or baked in an Oven; yet melted away before the gentle heat of the rising Sun. And the Divine Wisdom appears in thus contriving the matter, whither he has determin'd to translate us to Heaven while we are young, or in our riper and more advanced Years.

Indeed if we knew before hand, that we should be caught up into Heaven while we are young (which it may be God has decreed) we fancy this would make us very serious, diligent, circumspect in our walk, and mightily weaned from the World, *&c.* But then if we were so, it would look rather like *Force* than *Inclination*, and would be no very clear Argument of a truly holy temper of Soul. For this is no more than the worst of Men, yea the vilest Malefactors will pretend to with a great deal of seeming seriousness, when their days are numbred, and they know they must die within a very

very narrow compaſs of time. But then it is not much regarded, unleſs it be by a few who from an Exceſs of Charity, are willing to hope well of others on very ſlender grounds. For 'tis not the inward Spring of *Love*, ſo much as *Fear* that hangs like a dead weight upon their Spirits, which ſets 'em a going after this ſort. All our contempt of the World, our florid Speeches of Heaven, yea, the whole of our Religion would be thought to be the meer product of our Melancholy Circumſtances, and Men would conclude, that were we ſure of holding out to extreme Old Age, we ſhould naturally give our ſelves as great a looſe, as the reſt of Mankind.

This would put a *ſtur* upon all that we do; ſo it would put a ſtop to many other Inſtances of our Duty. Some who reach Heaven betimes, are very ſerviceable to God and their Generation in Church and State, by Induſtry in their Callings, Innocent and Chearful Converſe with their Relations and Friends, and make a great Improvement in uſeful Arts and Sciences. But what a check would it be upon their diligence, if they knew before hand, they muſt juſt be ſhewn to the World, and then ſnatch'd out of it? Men would then think it decent to throw off the affairs

of

of Life, diſmiſs their Earthly Buſineſs, apply themſelves meerly to Acts of Devotion, and *run* out of the World before God calls them out of it.

On the other hand, did we certainly fore-know, what it may be God has determin'd, that we ſhould live a very long while; we ſhould be apt to trifle away our precious Hours, and contentedly continue under the guilt of wilful ſins, ſaying within our ſelves we have time enough before us. We ſhould be very fond of this Earth, full of anxious Thoughts and pale Fears, eager and greedy in our Purſuits after it, as having ſo many Neceſſities to provide for, and ſo many Years to ſpend in it, and a large Family to provide for; abundance of Forrage muſt be gathered for a numerous Army that is to March a great way through a Barren Country. The Temptations of this World would be ſtronger; while the Hopes and Fears of the next, being like the Sun in Winter at a great diſtance, would have but a weak influence upon us.

It may be too ſometimes we ſhould be diſcouraged, to think we have ſo many Years of hard Labour yet to come; which would make us *ſweat and faint*. For *Thought* and *Fear* will do that as much as the ſcorching Heat and hard Labour.

bour. 'Tis enough to make a Man uneaſie before his time, to have ſuch a gloomy fore-ſight of his Affairs as this; 'I ſhall live till I am very Old, and 'the World will be weary of me; my 'Relations will be as ſick of me, as 'I of my Diſeaſe, and I be a burden 'to them as well as to my ſelf. They'll 'think it long till a puff of wind comes 'to carry away the dry withered Leaf, 'and will be ready to ſweep it away 'themſelves. I ſhall out-live my time 'of Service, and be deſpiſed in my Old 'Age. In the end of my Life I ſhall 'be like a *Dial*, which Men reſorted to, 'while it was day, and the Sun ſhone 'upon it; but though the former Lines 'remain, yet when the Evening comes 'no Man turns aſide to it, but paſſes it 'by as an uſeleſs thing, and regards it 'no more than the dry and rotten *Poſt* 'on which it ſtands.

In a word, if God had not kept us in the Dark as to the time of our Tranſlation into Heaven, we had loſt (what I am ſure we cannot well ſpare) one of the moſt quick'ning Motives to Holy Diligence; and one very ſtrong Cordial to ſupport us under all the Fatigues of our preſent Duty, *viz.* we know not at what Hour our Lord will come, whither at the Sixth, or the Ninth, or the Eleventh, or

or till Mid-night, to put an end to our Services and Sorrows.

4. God has fixed this time, and invariably keeps to it. Not so much as *a Hair falls to the ground without our Heavenly Father*; much less can the Head it self on which they all grow.

Providence does in a peculiar manner concern it self about the Death of *Reasonable* Creatures, especially of his own *Children*. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the Death of his Saints. This is a Point on which the Temporal, Spiritual and Eternal well-fare of many others, whole Families, Churches, yea, and Nations sometime do depend. There's an end of all Seasons of Grace, opportunities for Service, their Eternal State is irrevocably fixed and determined, and their degrees of Endless Misery or Happiness, are settled when the last Fatal stroke is given. 'Tis fit that God should appoint the time of that which is attended with Consequences of so great Moment. None besides is fit to do it. No Man would be willing his Times should be in the hand, and at the Mercy of his Implacable *Enemies*. 'Tis well that we our *selves* are not to determine this Affair. For we should often change our Minds within the narrow compass of one Day. For such is our humour,

humour, that we naturally run from one extreme to another; either we are apt Immoderately to love Life, or elſe Peeviſhly to deſire Death: either we grow too regardleſs of Heaven, or are in too much haſt for it: we would always be here, or we muſt preſently be gone. If we were much wiſer and better than we are, we ſhould be at a very great loſs; unleſs in both theſe we exceeded the Apoſtle *Paul*, who was in a great ſtrait between Two, *what to chooſe* ſays he, *I wot not*; could not well tell whither he had beſt to go or ſtay.

'Tis well 'tis not left to the determination of our *Friends*. For *affectionate* Husbands and *paſſionate* Wives, *fond* Parents, and now and then a very *loving* Child, O how would they hang and claſp about, and pull down each other, when any of them began to mount, hardly would any one be ſuffered to go till all were agreed to depart together, which would ſcarce be, till all were involved in one very deep and common diſtreſs: like *Seaſon Birds* which fly away in Flocks to another Country, each one calling to his Companion; but then it is not till the near approach of a Cold and Sharp Winter that would equally pinch them all.

But if we could agree, 'tis not fit we ſhould determine this matter. 'Tis a *Royalty* to have the power of Life and Death, which God reſerves to himſelf; 'tis not for Subjects to invade his Prerogative, and with their unhallowed Hands to touch the leaſt Flower of his Imperial Crown. God, as the great King of all the Earth, ſends down the *Dead-Warrant* againſt the Wicked, and appoints the day when the Malefactor ſhall be Executed: And as a wiſe Father aſſigns the time when his Children who are on their Travels for their Improvement in this foreign Country, ſhall return home. He alſo appoints the very Method of their Conveyance. Some Sail in a calmer Seaſon, and move ſo ſlowly, that you can hardly perceive they ſtir at all: Others are driven forward with a briſker Wind; which makes the higher and the more rolling Sea indeed, and the Paſſenger the ſicker; but then the Paſſage is the quicker and ſhorter for it. Death is like a Moth to ſome; but comes on others like a Lion, that unexpectedly leaps on the unwary Lamb, and breaks all his Bones in the twinkling of an Eye.

But if we ſhould faucily pretend to invade this Prerogative of God and ſeize it for our own Uſe, we have not Knowledge and Wiſdom enough to manage it.

For

For God only knows when the Task is finiſht, which he has fitly appointed every Man to do; when one Star muſt ſet that another may riſe and ſhine. When 'tis fitteſt for *Moſes* to withdraw, and make room for *Joſhua* to come upon the Stage, that the Honour of ſerving God may not be engroſs'd by one, but be ſhared between 'em both. He only knows when a Soul is come to that Stature which it muſt arrive at, that it may be big enough to fill up that place, and his Head ſtrong enough to bear that maſſy Crown of Glory which he has provided for it in the Heavenly Kingdom.

He alone who ſees things *unborn*, as they lye in the Womb of their diſtant Cauſes, fore-knows the Evil that is to come, and will prove too hard for us to bear: When the riſing Storm (the evil of Puniſhment, or of Trial and Temptation) that's coming upon a Nation, a Church, a Family, or a particular Perſon, would be ſo ſtrong as to over-ſet the Veſſel: He alone therefore is fit to give the ſailing Orders, and aſſign the time when it ſhall be laid up in a ſafe Harbour. His *Greens* muſt be early hous'd in a warm place, becauſe they are ſo tender, that the ſharpneſs of the Weather would nip and kill 'em. But the *Corn* can endure the cold of the Winter, and the heat of the

Summer, Froſt and Snow, Wind and Sun; and it muſt grow longer in the open Field, before it be fit to be cut down and carried into the Garner.

This one Conſideration would anſwer a great many Cavils and Objections, *viz.* Why are ſome cut off very young, others in the midſt of their days and uſefulneſs? Why are others delayed ſo long? Here the Ground is cover'd with tender Bloſſoms, ſhook off by a violent Blaſt. There you may ſee a great Gap made in the Garden by the cutting down of a large ſpreading Tree, laden with excellent Fruit, 'tis a thouſand pities it did not grow that it might bear a great deal longer. But yonders a dry old Trunk that does little more than take up ſo much room and cumber the Ground. Why are ſome taken up into Heaven ſo ſoon when they can ſo ill be ſpared on Earth? Why are others ſtaked down here ſo long, when they can do ſo little, that others, as well as they themſelves, wiſh they were gone? Why does not God at leaſt gather thoſe who are overwhelm'd with Sorrows, drooping with Age, full of Grace, Peace, and triumphant Aſſurance, and bleſs'd with high Communion with God. Like a Flower fully blown, and fill'd too with Tears of Dew, or wet all over with drops of Rain, freely opening its Leaves, that the diſ-

diſcovery of its Beauty may invite, and bowing its Head, as tho' it ſilently begg'd ſome or other with a kind Hand to pluck and carry it away. *Be ſtill and know that he is God*; that all this falls out by the wiſe Decree of him, who is *a God of Judgment*, who knows the Times and Seaſons (which is more than thou doſt) and who *worketh all things according to the Counſel of his own Will.* Bleſſed are all they that wait for him, who live and die to him, who can part with the lives of their deareſt Friends and their own when he calls for them, and under ſuch trying Providences manifeſt a willing ſubjection to the Father of Lights and Spirits.

5. His time of removing his People to Heaven is the Beſt. *In due time we ſhall reap if we faint not.* This follows from the former Particular. There can be no ſhadow of Reaſon to doubt of it, if we conſider his infinite *Wiſdom*, and the tender *Affection* he bears to all his Children. If any of 'em therefore be ſpeedily taken up into Paradiſe, 'tis becauſe all things conſider'd it was beſt for them. Happy Souls who have ſo ſoon entred upon their Eternal Reſt, and got out of the Croud of this wretched World! who, as dearly as they loved us, would not on any account whatſoever come down to us again to Watch and Wreſtle, Fight and Strive, Sin and Complain, as they themſelves

once did, and as we ſhall further do for a ſeaſon (wretched Creatures that we are!) till we flye up to that place of Victory which they have happily reached before us.

But if it ſhould be very *late* before we reach 'em, and join that bright Body, 'tis *beſt for us* that it ſhould be ſo, and the days of our Purifying be prolong'd. Sure then we ſhall be tired with ſo long a Journey, and Reſt will be the ſweeter to us for our being throughly weary. And if it be not greatly our fault, our Reward will be encreaſing all that while. 'Tis true indeed, while the Fruit hangs upon the Tree, it may be ſadly toſs'd there; yea wither'd and blaſted by a malignant Wind, and be a little putrified by length of time and unſeaſonable Weather. But we know who hath ſaid, *My Grace is ſufficient for thee.* Unleſs we are highly wanting to our ſelves, the longer the Fruit is on the Tree, the larger and the fairer will it grow there. Which naturally leads me from this third Point of the *Method* and *Order* of God in beſtowing theſe eternal Mercies, *viz.* 'Tis not (uſually) till after ſome time of painful Obedience, which at the longeſt can't be very long, but 'tis uncertain to us whither it ſhall be longer or ſhorter, tho' it be certainly known to God, who has fixed the time

and

and invariably keeps to it, and he having determin'd it, we are ſure all things conſider'd muſt be beſt.

From this wiſe *Method* of his I ſay, we are naturally led to the

IV. And laſt Point, *viz.* The Meaſures and Degrees wherein God beſtows theſe Eternal Bleſſings. IV.

True indeed, all holy Souls above ſee the ſame bleſſed Objects, God and Chriſt; but among the ſame ranks of Beings, one may have a ſtronger Eye than another. They are all fill'd with Glory; but ſome Veſſels are more capacious than others. They are all in the ſame Palace, but there may be higher and lower Seats in the ſame Room. All their Glories are purchaſed by one Bloud, and the Saints are all equally the Children of God: But all a Man's Children may be redeem'd from Slavery by one common Sum; and yet for very good Reaſons ſome may have a double Portion of their Father's Eſtate, according to their Birth or Behaviour.

As for that Parable of the Labourers receiving each one a Peny; 'tis not to be underſtood of an *equality of Rewards* in Heaven, but of *external Privileges* here on Earth: Which appears from thoſe Words with which this Parable is brought in and cloſed up, *viz. The laſt ſhall be*

first, and the first shall be last; for many be called, but few are chosen: Whereby 'tis plain our Saviour speaks of such a Privilege, as those who are not chosen of God, but only externally called might be made partakers, which sure can't be meant of Eternal Salvation in Heaven.

Indeed had God setled an equal Proportion of the future Reward for his Servants, whither they did and suffer'd little or much for him, it would have been a very great check to their Zeal and Industry for him; but he hath wisely order'd it otherwise, for every Man shall Reap according as he Sows, as to quality and quantity too: Which thought is sufficient to raise and quicken Men to the greatest activity and vigour in his Service.

Hereby God has effectually provided, as for the promoting our Diligence, so also for the advancing of his own Glory. For there is so vast an inequality between our best Services, and the more abundant recompence of Reward, that tho' still God does observe some proportion too in the case; he proceeds not barely according to the standard of Equity, but that too of the most magnificent and royal Bounty at one and the same time.

Having thus proved that the Covenant is well order'd as to the Eternal Blessings of it, because such admirable care is taken therein

therein for securing the Glory of God, the Duty, Comfort and Happiness of Man: I need not use many words to shew, that 'tis well order'd in the other respect also, *viz.* Because herein also wise Provision is made for the Honour of Christ.

For 'tis he that hath *purchased* Heaven for us by his Bloud, has clearly *revealed* it to us by his Gospel, is *entred* into it in his own Person, as our Fore-runner to prepare Mansions for us there; who *receives* our departing Spirits, *presents* 'em before the Throne of God with exceeding great joy, and at the last Day will *set* the Crown of eternal Glory on the Heads of all the Saints. And no sooner has he put it on with his Hand, but every one of them pulls it off again with their own, and humbly casteth it at his Foot, saying, *Worthy is the Lamb to receive Blessing, and Glory, and Honour, and Praise, and Thanksgiving,*

To Conclude.

Let us then be often thinking on the Eternal Blessings of the Covenant, and clear up our Interest in 'em to our own Souls; and perswade and help all *ours* to do the like. This will help us to bear all our Calamities, whither Pains with which our Bodies are exercised, or Breaches that God makes on our Families.

Happy

Happy are our godly Friends and Relations who have got the ſtart of ſuch Loiterers as we; who have left us and a ſick Bed, and pained Body, and a tottering Tabernacle; and are entred into their everlaſting Reſt.

The well-grounded Aſſurance of this which they expreſſed during their Sickneſs, and continued ſo to do notwithſtanding Death was viſibly making its near approaches to 'em, yea, juſt as it was laying hold of 'em with its cold Hands, did afford us a great ſupport, which we needed as well as they. The *remembrance* of it will do the ſame now they are gone; and the thought that we contributed any thing towards it.

Now one of thoſe Cords that tied us down to this Earth is cut, and we have one Help more to the having our Converſation in Heaven, *viz. Some more of our deareſt Friends are got into it.* Let us be followers of them who thro' Faith and Patience are poſſeſs'd of the Promiſe, and then we ſhall overtake them, ſee them again, and dwell with them, and find their Perſons and their Converſe unconceivably finer and ſweeter, even tho' it was excellent and admirable. All the little Knots which they certainly had, tho' ſo ſmall that we could not ſee them, ſhall be plained; all the little inviſible Wrinkles

Wrincles shall be smooth'd. Perfect Beauties shall they be in the Judgment of Man, and of God too. They and we shall Embrace, Rejoice, and never part any more. *For I would not have you ignorant* 1 *Thess.* 4. *Brethren*; nor would I have you carry it 14. 15. Brethren, like them that are Ignorant, *concerning them which are asleep* in Jesus; *that ye sorrow not even as others that have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him: Then shall we* and they *ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

SERM.

SERMON V.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made with me an everlaſting Covenant, order'd in all things and ſure: for this is all my ſalvation and all my deſire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THIS this particular Property of the Covenant of Grace which yet lies under Conſideration, *viz.* That 'tis a well *order'd* one *in all things*; *i. e.* That all the Parts of it are ſo contrived, that they have a natural tendency effectually to promote the great Ends of the Covenant; which are the Glory of God, the Honour of Chriſt, the Duty, Comfort and Happineſs of Man.

I have proved that it is ſo, as to the *Mediator* and *Surety* of it: And as to the *Spiritual* Bleſſings contained in it; and the *Eternal* ones promis'd in it.

I proceed to ſhew the ſame as to *Temporal* ones. Altho' theſe are nothing near ſo conſiderable as either of the former, yet have they ſo much Worth and Value in them, that they are by no means to be diſpiſed. The Riches of the Covenant of Grace indeed conſiſt in the Spiritual and Eternal Bleſſings contained in it: As the Riches of the Earth do in the Mines of precious Metals, the Veins of Silver and Gold that are hid in the Bowels of it. But then Temporal Bleſſings are like thoſe Plants and Flowers, that adorn the Surface of the Ground, and perfume the Air; both neceſſary and pleaſant, which yield refreſhment to the Paſſenger and nouriſhment to the Owner. Theſe therefore are taken into the Covenant, and therein promis'd in ſuch a manner, that in reſpect of them too the Covenant is wiſely order'd; as will appear if we conſider the following Particulars.

I. I. Therein 'tis promiſed that Neceſſaries ſhall Ordinarily be given ſome way or other.

I ſay *Ordinarily*. For there are ſome extraordinary Caſes (which happen but ſeldom) wherein I doubt not but 'tis poſſible, that a truly pious Man may die for want of neceſſaries, *ex. gr.* When God viſits a very ſinful Land with any, but

eſpecially withal thoſe three ſevere Judgments of his, Plague, War and Famine: In ſuch a caſe I do not ſee but that a godly Man may die of Famine, as well as fall by the Sword or Peſtilence, or indeed be cut off by a Feaver or any other Diſeaſe, eſpecially if thro' the Flight, Impriſonment, or Death of all his Friends he want due Care and neceſſary Attendance. And I think for any one to ſay of all that ever were ſtarv'd to death in a long Siege, or a waſting War, or a tedious Voyage, were wicked, to a Man, would be a very wicked and uncharitable Cenſure: And for us to add our cruel Judgment to God's ſevere tho' righteous one.

Nor can God herein be juſtly charg'd with a breach of Covenant. For holy Men are too often guilty of a notorious Neglect and Breach of thoſe Conditions which God has preſcribed as requiſite on our parts in order to our eſcaping in ſuch common Calamities. They have many ſad perſonal Failings; they do not deeply bewail publick Abominations, but do reſemble and comply with the evil manners of thoſe with whom they are mix'd: As ſound Fruit may have a ſpeck or two by lying next to that which is rotten. Very few of his Children do reſemble that ſecond Father of all Mankind, *Noah* I mean, who was *perfect before God, when all*

all flesh had corrupted their way: That good Man then was like his own Ark in which he was saved; the Flouds of ungodly Men that encompast him on every side, did not break in upon his Innocence, no more than the surrounding Waters did afterwards on his little Vessel; but he was an unwearied, an untainted Preacher, and an uncorrupted doer of Righteousness, and so he was delivered.

All therefore which I affirm is, that *ordinarily* Necessaries shall be given; and that *in some way or other.* If not by a Blessing on our lawful Callings, yet by stirring up the Hearts of others to relieve us. This latter way it may be doth not so well suit our high Spirits. But tho' God satisfie our Hunger, he is not bound to gratifie our Pride, and make provision for our Necessities and our Lusts too. Whither our Bread be made of Corn that springs from the Earth, in which we sow'd it; or whither it dropt down from Heaven: Whither we have it by the Sweat of our Brows, or the charitable Hand of others; if God send it any way, which he thinks best (tho' we do not) 'tis as much as his Promise obliges him to.

Now

Now *that* a holy Man *ordinarily* shall have. *He hath given meat to them that fear him*, says the Psalmist; Aye, he *hath* done so formerly may another say; but will he do so again? Yes, he will; for it follows, *he will ever be mindful of his Covenant.* Psal. 111. 5.

Well, but a Man may be starv'd with *Cold* as well as with Hunger. And therefore a holy Man may expect not only Food but Raiment too. See with what variety of Arguments our Saviour presseth us to a steady Belief of this. *Matth. 6.* from the 25th to the end: Where he condemns distrustful Fears upon this Head as the practice of an *Heathen*, who is a stranger to the Covenant of Promises, but very unsuitable to a Child of God, who, if he will rely upon the divine Word, shall have *all these things added to* him. And to overcome our unbelieving Doubts, he urges the Instance of divine Care in feeding the worthless Birds that flye in the Air, and the Lillies that grow in the Field. Tho' we must not expect to be as *gorgiously* arrayed as the one of them nor be provided for in a course of Laziness *without sowing or reaping, without toiling or spinning*, as both of them are. Which leads to the

II. II. Thing, *viz.* That as for the Comforts of Life, they are not promis'd abſolutely, but upon certain moſt reaſonable Terms. As,

1. Provided we diligently do what may procure, and carefully avoid what may hinder 'em in a *natural way.* There are ſome Vices and Follies, which by the ordinary courſe of things, do blaſt Men's Reputation, waſt their Eſtates, impair their Health, ſhorten their Days, perplex and confound all their Affairs. Such as Idleneſs, neglect of their proper Buſineſs, want of common Diſcretion in ordering it and themſelves, Luxury, Intemperance, Uncleaneſs, *&c.* This is founded *in the nature of things*, and could we ſuppoſe there were no God, or no Providence, yet Miſery is the neceſſary reſult of theſe Vices, and does as naturally ſpring from them as ſharp Liquor from the preſſing of wild Grapes.

Now if a holy Man be guilty of a ſingle Act or two of theſe ſins *after* his ſaving Converſion to God; much more if he has been guilty of the habitual Practice of 'em *before*; God many times (in a great meaſure at leaſt) ſuffers him to languiſh a great part, if not the whole remainder of his Life, under the bitter Fruits of his own Wickedneſs.

Yea,

Yea, a holy *Child* may labour under Poverty, and great bodily Distempers as the effect of his *Parents* folly. For if the whole Bottom be rotten, the Threads of Life that are wound off it can never be found in a *natural* way according to God's established order between Causes and Effects.

Now in such cases, tho' upon a Man's sincere Repentance, God may take some of the Weights out of the Scale, lighten the Burden, or allay the Evil, especially by the inward Comforts of Repentance and Pardon; yet he is not wont wholly to remove the Calamity, but still is used to leave some Marks of his Displeasure on the sincere Penitent even to his dying day. Indeed it can't be otherwise unless he should interpose by his own immediate Hand. But 'tis not rationally to be expected, that he should alter the *nature of things*, and do Miracles for our ease in this World, tho' he does do Wonders for our Salvation in the next.

Now in this respect the Covenant is wisely *order'd*. 'Tis an effect of divine Prudence, that the kind Method's of his Grace shall not overturn the wise Constitutions of Nature. For one and the same God is the Author of 'em both, and acts like Himself when he so adjusts very intricate matters, that every Wheel (tho'

ſome of 'em ſeem to turn contrary) ſhall move regularly without claſhing or interfering. Did he not ſuffer his own Children to eat theſe genuine Fruits of their own Follies, he would encourage them in an evil way, tempt 'em to throw aſide the uſe of their own Thought and Wiſdom, Care and Diligence, yea of common and of ſaving Grace too; and they would not be govern'd either as reaſonable Creatures, or as renewed ones. They would quickly expect to have the whole of their Proviſion and Defence from extraordinary interpoſitions of a miraculous Providence, without any prudent or vertuous Conduct of themſelves. They would be enduced to lie down to ſleep, and ſuffer the Ship to be carried down the natural Current, in hopes God would *create* a Wind on purpoſe to blow them off from the Rock, when thro' their own Folly they were juſt a daſhing upon it. But this ſhall not be. God will ordinarily leave even good Men to the proper Conſequences of their *own* or their Parents *groſs* Sins: Which if he did not do, he would let ſlip one of the moſt effectual Means of doing them good. For this is a very powerful Inſtrument of humbling 'em for what is paſt, as well as making them wiſer for the future, for them every now and then to feel the throbbing Pains

cauſed

cauſed by the Thorns ſtill ſticking in their Fleſh which firſt ran into it when they madly broke thro' the Hedge, which he had mercifully planted to keep them from wandering.

But we muſt not only avoid what would pull down Miſery on our Heads, and do what may draw down the divine Bleſſing in a *natural* way: But muſt alſo

2. Avoid what has a fatal Influence, and do what may have a kindly one in a *moral* way too, which is another moſt reaſonable term of enjoying the Comforts of this Life. By which I mean, we muſt lead a Life of cloſe, ſincere, univerſal Obedience to the Commandments of God. He can cauſe a Rod to grow from the Seeds or Kernels of that forbidden Fruit which we have gathered with unhallowed Hands. He can cauſe Affliction to ſpring out of the Duſt, as we read he did in the Land of *Egypt*. He hath innumerable Calamities which we dream not of, wherewith he can Correct us for our Diſobedience. In that caſe a ſtormy Wind ſhall blow from ſome point of the Compaſs or other. And if it be a foul Offence, tho' upon a ſincere Repentance he will forgive us here, and ſave us hereafter, yet will he take *Vengeance on our Inventions*: Of which *David* is a known Inſtance on the death of *Uriah*, he and his Family went

into deep *Mourning*, and a long black train of Afflictions followed him and his Children to his dying day. *The Lord God* will be *a Sun and a Shield, and no good thing will he with-hold*; but then comes in the limitation, *from them that walk uprightly.* In this respect the Covenant is wisely ordered. His Wisdom, his Holiness, his Paternal Justice and his Truth, would be greatly blemisht if he did not by seasonable Rubukes, discountenance his wanton and rebellious Children. They would be harden'd in sin, and then according to the stated Rule of his holy Word, they must eternally perish for it. But that shall never be. *His loving kindness shall not utterly be taken away*; and that it may not, their earthly Comforts often are so. He breaks the peace of their Lives, because he will not break his own Covenant; and the dearest of their earthly Comforts fail 'em because he will not suffer his own *Faithfulness* to do so.

But tho' we be ever so Holy, yet there is another Condition of God's giving or continuing temporal Mercies, without which none but a mad Man would desire to have 'em. *viz.*

3. Provided, that all things being consider'd that ought to be consider'd, it be best we should have 'em. Now there are

are ſeveral things to be weigh'd, of which we are no competent Judges.

(1) Provided it be beſt, the caſe of others being conſider'd. Several truly good Men may be deſirous of being fixed in the ſame Poſt of Service and Advantage. All of 'em can't be gratified at once in their ſo contrary deſires, except the Decrees of Heaven ſhould, like thoſe imaginary Lines which Aſtronomers draw in it, croſs and inter-ſect each other. Sometimes all of 'em miſs of the deſired Happineſs. God may ſee it fit to permit others to ſtep into that place in his juſt and righteous Judgment, becauſe they are leſs capable of performing the Duties of it; and he will carry on his holy Ends in his own way. But at other times he puts by good Men and ſettles others in that place in mercy to the Publick, becauſe they are better fitted for it. Nor is he to be blamed for ſo doing. Becauſe tho' he is in a peculiar manner the *Father* of good Men, yet he is withal the *Ruler* of the World. Now he muſt and will act ſuitably to both thoſe Relations, and not carry it as weak Princes do, who often prefer their Favourites, tho' ever ſo unfit, to the great prejudice of the Community.

If any might have expected upon the account of Eminent Holiness, to have lived in perpetual Prosperity, the Apostles of Christ in general, and St. *Paul* in particular, might most reasonably have looked for it: But yet what Exercises did he meet with from Enemies and Friends too. They who once were ready to *pull out their own Eyes* for him, were so changed on a sudden, as to be ready to pluck out *his*. What between the one and the other he met with repeated Troubles. See at your leisure, a short Epitomy of the History of his Life, in 2 *Cor.* 11. 25. 26. 27. The greater part of which is written in *Black Letters*. But this was a great proof of his Integrity, and of his full assurance of the Truth of that Gospel which he Preached. Without this, we had wanted one main Prop for our Faith. He sowed in Tears, planted in the sweat of his Brows, and water'd it with his Bloud, and the whole Church of Christ has, and shall reap the blessed Fruit of it to the end of the World.

(2) Provided it make most for our Future. Temporal, especially for our Spiritual and Eternal Advantage. Such a Mercy may be good for the present; but it may be, should it be given or continued, in a little while it would redoun'd to our greater Prejudice; in which case 'tis

'tis true Kindness to deny or remove it.

It may be the doing so is necessary for the prevention of some growing Sin. A wise Physician, to prevent a threat'ning Consumption, will order a Man to cut off his Hair, tho' it hang down in curious lovely Locks, and be neatly turn'd up in wanton Curles; which if the Patient will not submit unto (tho' with a sigh) every one will conclude, that there's nothing *within* the Man's Head answerable to the fair Bush that is hung forth on the out side of it.

It may be the want of temporal Comforts is necessary for the preserving, recovery, manifestation, and growth of the Graces of God in our Souls, or for the securing and encreasing our eternal Happiness. Now these are our main Interests, and our biggest Concerns, and the great things of the Covenant, to which lesser ones must give way. Surely 'tis Wisdom to throw the mean and contemptible Lumber over-board to preserve the Treasure and Lives of the Passengers which otherwise would be lost.

(3.) Provided it make most for God's Glory. This is the highest and the last End of all God's Actions. He has no higher nor no nobler a one to act for. 'Tis but a *God-like* owning of himself to do

do all things for himself. He never did any one action, he never did nor will bestow Spiritual or Eternal Mercies, but consistently with, and in subserviency to his own Honour, He parted with his dear and eternal Son, that his Glory might shine forh in all his Acts of Grace towards us. This which he hath been so tender of in all the great steps of Kindness he hath taken, he will never suffer to be eclips'd and blemisht meerly to gratifie our Humour in such Trifles as Temporal Blessings really are, if laid in the Ballance with Spiritual and Eternal ones.

So much for that second Proposition; that the Comforts of Life are not promis'd *absolutely*, but upon certain most reasonable Terms; and what they are I have laid before you,

III. III. According to these Terms so wisely settled, there is a mixture of Good and Evil, Prosperity and Adversity, mutually succeeding each other in the Life of every holy Man. We are Travellers towards Heaven, and like Men in a long Journey, sometimes we are mounting up the high Hills; but at other times we are sunk down into the low and miry Vallies. Now the Light shines full in our Faces, and anon the Wind beats fiercely upon them. Now a Storm, quickly after a Calm, and

e'er

e'er long the Clouds return again after the Rain. The whole of our time is divided between Summer and Winter, Heat and Cold, Night and Day, Light and Darkness. Sometimes our days are longer; at other times our Nights are so. But a constant Revolution there is of Day and Night, of Good and Evil, by the wise appointment of Heaven. The Wisdom of such a Conduct will appear, if we consider the following Particulars.

1. This is a proper method to prevent, or at least to put an end to the Sins of either state of Life. Do but consider the great Mischiefs that would follow if our Lives were all of *a piece:* If on the one hand we were always fed with Honey, or if on the other, we had nothing but Wormwood and Gall squeez'd into our Cup.

Suppose we enjoy'd *uninterrupted Prosperity*, as we fain would, this would be our Bane. This is one great occasion of the utter ruin of wicked Men. *They have no changes, therefore they fear not God.* Psal. 55. 19. Now there are are so many remainders of Corruption in the Hearts of good Men, that if they were always fed in fat Pastures, they would wax wanton, turn their Backs upon God, and lift up their Heels against him. Pride, sinful Security, luke-warmness, forgetfulness of God and themselves, neglect of Prayer, self-examination,

nation, and other holy Duties, or at leaſt deadneſs and drowſineſs of Soul in 'em, an empty Form of Religion without the Life, Spirit and Power of Godlineſs, and abundance of other Evils would break in upon 'em. Let but a Chriſtian (ſays one) be but two or three Years together without any Affliction at all, he is good for little. He can't Pray, nor Hear, nor Meditate, nor Diſcourſe in that holy, ſerious, heavenly manner as he was wont to do. If the warm Sun ſhine for ſeveral Months together upon God's encloſed Garden, without ſo much as one ſhower of Rain, how faſt do the Weeds multiply, the Flies ſwarm, an Army of Locuſts and Caterpillars devour its pleaſant Fruits, and the choiceſt Flowers wither, ſhed their Leaves, droop and hang down their ſickly Heads, having in a manner almoſt loſt all their Beauty and Sweetneſs. Now to prevent, or at leaſt to cure theſe ſpiriual Evils, God will not ſuffer us to enjoy unbroken Proſperity, but ſends affliction and trouble.

But then on the other hand, if we ſhould groan under *perpetual Adverſity* as much Miſchief would be done that way. We ſhould be froward and impatient, murmur and repine, be tempted to unbecoming Thoughts, and apt to flye out into Atheiſtical Speeches; ſaying, as our Betters have done, *I am plagued every day, and*

and chastened every Morning, verily, I have cleansed my heart and hands in vain. Psal. 73. 13.

We have much ado to avoid this now, tho' our Trials be short, for a Moment or two. How much more would it be so, if the whole thread of our Lives were full of Knots closely touching one another. Were we always on the Rack, and continually chasten'd with sore Pains on our Beds, how could we *walk about doing good?* Then the Correction of our Faults would prove an utter Obstruction to our Duty. But our wise heavenly Father will *not always chide, neither will he retain his anger for ever*, lest he utterly discourages, and quite break our Spirits. *He remembers our frame whereof we are made, that we are but dust*, and should be scatter'd like it, if a stiff Gale of Wind did always blow upon us. He considers *our flesh is not like brass or iron, and our strength is not like the strength of stones*; and yet if it were, a Stone is worn away with continual dropping.

Were we never in the Fire, our Dross would not be consumed; and should we always lye there our Silver and Gold would be wasted: Were we never moved, we should be intollerably lifted up with Pride; and were we never delivered, we should be unmeasurably cast down with Sorrow. God wisely orders a mixture and succession of Good and Evil,

Evil, that when we enjoy the one, we might not weep and rave like Men who are without hope; and when we feel the other, we might not rejoice and roar like Men that are without fear.

2. Hereby God takes a prudent Method for the Trial, Exercise, and Improvement of his people's Graces. In the fore-going Discourse I have shewed you, that holy Men are continued on Earth to this End, otherwise they had been wrought in 'em in vain; to be sure they cannot grow and prosper without the exercise of them. But tho' they should live ever so long, they could not be tryed or improved, for they could not be exercised without this mixture and succession of Good and Evil. There could be no room for many of them, and not room enough for any of them to appear in their Beauty and Glory.

Let us consider how it would be if it were always a time of prosperity with the People of God, and they were never exercised with any Calamity. Where then would be the Proof and Glory of their Faith and Hope, Patience, Resignation and Submission to the Will of God? What use is their of Patience, when we have no Burthen to bear? 'Tis an easie thing to make a florid Speech about Submission to the Will of God while we sit warm

warm and undisturb'd in our own Nests; but when we are driven away like a Bird, and forced to wander like a Patridge on the Mountains, we shall find it a very hard matter to put in practice our own Doctrine. There's no difficulty sure in being contented, when we have all that our Hearts can desire. For ought we know these Graces may be counterfeit, till an evil day brings them to the Test. To be sure they can't be very large and strong if they are never exercis'd. But now when troubles press hard upon us, then to depend upon God and resign our selves to him, to *wait* on him in *the way of his Judgments*, then to be able to say, thy Rod, as smart as it is, has not alienated our Affections from thee; but still the *desire of our Souls is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name*; then to be contented and in *patience to possess our own Souls* when we have lost our dearest possession, even a part of our selves; then to *retain our Integrity* when little less is left us; tho' there be *no fruit in the Vine, and the Fig-tree does not blossom* any longer; yea, when not only the fair Blossoms are fallen off, but the lovely Tree too on which they grew is cut down, then to be able to *rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our Salvation*, this is hard, this is noble, this is praise-worthy indeed. This

is

is what holy Men have been, in some measure, enabled thro' Grace to do. The purging out of their Corruptions, and the lively exercise of their Graces, has given them such a knowledge of themselves and their good estate towards God, as has been matter of great comfort to them all their days. As the stirring of the Child within, notwithstanding the present uneasiness it causes to the Mother, yet affords a greater pleasure, because 'tis a certain sign of its life.

But then on the other hand, should we never see an happy day on Earth, where would be the proof and glory of our *Humility*, *Heavenly-mindedness* and *Contempt* of this World? Others would be apt to think and say, The only reason why these Men talk so meanly of the Earth, and so much of Heaven, is, because they can't attain to much of the things of this Life, and on that account alone it is that they so much disparage them. All their pretended strictness in Religion is meerly the product of their melancholly Circumstances: Did they fare as well, they would do as ill as we whom they now do so liberally reproach. But now when the Children of God enjoy much of this World, and yet manifest that they live above it, then can make God their chiefest joy, when they have so many other things to steal

steal away their Hearts, so many other Chanels to drain away the Stream of their Affections from him; then will it be seen that they are Men of a different make and frame from others; that an admirable Temper, even the Spirit of the living God is in them; that the Righteous is far more excellent than his Neighbour, and Heaven is his *Choice* and not barely his *Refuge*.

Thus does this wise Conduct of God make way for the manifestation, exercise and encrease of the several Graces of his People; every one of them in their own rank and order; some of which are calculated for a time of Prosperity, and others for an hour of Adversity: As the Sun is appointed to run round the Heavens in all his Glory in the day time, and the Moon with the Stars to walk about the Earth at the night season.

3. Herein God has order'd matters for his own Glory. This follows from the two foregoing Particulars. If his People enjoy'd an uninterrupted prosperity, his *Holiness* would be eclips'd, his *Paternal Justice* would be clouded, his *Truth* and *Faithfulness* would drop to the Ground. For all these, as I have formerly observ'd, oblige him to correct them for those Faults and Follies which Prosperity usually draws forth.

On the other hand, if they labour'd under perpetual Adverſity, where would be his *Goodneſs*, his *Mercy*, his *Fatherly Pity*, and *tender Compaſſions*, his *Wiſdom* or his *Truth*, who hath ſo often ſaid, *Call upon me in a day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorifie me.* Though therefore *he cauſe grief, yet he will have compaſſion according to the multitude of his tender mercies: Weeping* may *endure for a night, but behold joy cometh in the morning.*

God will make a difference between our *preſent* and our *future* State. In Heaven there is pure Joy without any mixture of Sorrow: In Hell there is pure Sorrow without any mixture of Joy. There is no Darkneſs in the one, nor no glimmering of Light or Hope in the other.

But in this World there is a mixture in our ſelves, *Fleſh* and *Spirit*; and in our Actions, *Good* and *Evil*; and no wonder that there is the ſame in our Circumſtances too. Briefly, *Variety* adds a Beauty and Luſtre to Providence; as the well choſen mixture of Light and Shade ſets off a Picture. Wherefore *in the day of proſperity rejoice*, but with trembling; and *in the day of adverſity conſider* and faint not; *for God hath ſet one overagainſt the other, to the end that no man might find any thing after him.*

There

There are ſeveral other Particulars to be ſpoken to; but they muſt be reſerv'd for the following Sermon.

To Conclude.

1. Hence learn what is our Duty under all the Calamities of Life which we meet with, when God makes Breaches on our Families, and ſnatches away our neareſt Relations. If it were now as in the beginning, when the Woman was only taken from the *ſide* of the Man, and that too while he was in a profound ſleep, the Affliction would not be ſo great. But when ſhe is either haſtily torn from, or ſlowly cut out of his very Heart, and never to be brought to him again; the wound is the deeper, and the pain the greater. O that our Sufferings may bring our Sins to our Remembrance! And that God would give us his heavenly Grace to behave our ſelves wiſely, to walk in the middle Path between *deſpiſing* this *chaſtening of the Lord* on the one hand, and *fainting under his rebukes* on the other; And prevent either extreme, one of which the beſt of Men are naturally prone to run into; like a beautiful Flower that is fully blown, which is apt to crack and break the Hood in which it is incloſed, if not on this ſide, yet on that, and then its Leaves unhandſomely fall down.

2. Let us all be more weaned from this World, and not expect great things in it. You have heard God's Terms with reference to Temporal Blessings; let us not forget or leave them out. We are ready here to promise our selves more than he does. If the Building be broader than the Foundation, our Folly is great, and so will be the fall of such an irregular Edifice. Our Comments too often are larger than the Text, and what that will not bear; and so by being besides, are contrary to it. God's promises of Temporal Blessings are like a little silver Stream, whose Waters are small, but wholsome, and continually run in the Channel which he hath cut for them to flow in. Our own Promises are like the Waters of a swelling Torrent, that over-run the Banks and know no Bounds; but quickly fail and deceive the dry thirsty Passenger in the time of his greatest need. Let us mind the future recompence of Reward more, and seek after an Interest in that one single Promise which will be better to us, than if God should make Windows in Heaven, and open them to drop down ever so great worldly Abundance upon us, *viz.* That *all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose.* The Lord enflame our love, and help us to make

make our Calling and Election ſure, that we may know not only by Faith but by Experience too, that all things work for our ſpiritual and eternal Advantage. Then whoever be abſent, we ſhall have him continually preſent with us, he *will guide us by his Counſel, and afterwards receive us to Glory.*

SERMON VI.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made with me an everlaſting Covenant, order'd in all things and ſure: for this is all my ſalvation and all my deſire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THat which is yet further to be diſcourſed of, is to ſhew you that the Covenant of Grace is wiſely and well *ordered* as to Temporal Bleſſings. 'Tis ſo as you have heard, becauſe,

I. Therein Proviſion is made that Neceſſaries ſhall ordinarily be given ſome way or other. But, I.

II. As to the Comforts of Life, they are not abſolutely promis'd, but upon moſt reaſonabie Terms. *vix.* Provided we diligently do what may procure, and avoid what may hinder them in a Natural way or in a Moral; and provided all II.

things consider'd which ought to be consider'd, it be best that we should have 'em; the Case of others being weigh'd if it make most for our future Temporal, especially our spiritual and eternal Advantage, and if it make most for the Glory of God.

III. III. According to these Terms so wisely settled, there is a mixture of Good and Evil, Prosperity and Adversity mutually succeeding each other in the Life of every holy Man. This being a proper method to prevent or put an end to the Sins and Follies of either state of Life; to try, exercise and encrease our several Graces; and tending to the Glory of God.

I now proceed to the Fourth Thing.

IV. IV. God has reserved to himself the Judgment of this matter, and is wont to act accordingly, as to the time, manner, degree, and all other Circumstances of those Changes we meet with. He determines what Comforts shall be bestowed upon us, and when they shall be denied to us, or withdrawn from us. On which account the Covenant is wisely and well *ordered*. Two things will evidence this, which need little proof, but a great deal of consideration, *viz.* his *infinite Wisdom*, and our apparent *Weakness* and *Folly*,

who

who have not the compaſs of Thought which is abſolutely neceſſary for a right determining ſo intricate an Affair; whereas all things paſt, preſent, and to come, are altogether in view before his flaming and piercing Eye.

There is a great deal of difference in Men, and proportionably there muſt be in providential Diſpenſations. Some Hedges muſt be clipt oftener than others; elſe they will grow out of all ſhape. Some good Trees muſt be pruned twice to the others once, becauſe their luxuriant Branches grow faſter. Some Fruits require more Sun-ſhine, others more Shade: All muſt be managed by a skillful perſon, who knows the times and ſeaſons, and underſtands the nature of every Plant and Tree. For an ignorant Man would make as mad work as a wild Beaſt if he were let looſe in a Garden. When a Purge is neceſſary, if a Cordial be given, or Meat be eaten, 'tis as bad as Poiſon; it increaſes the Diſeaſe and kills the Patient. We all of us have our Diſeaſes; and God hath his *Specificks*, and infinite Wiſdom to apply 'em. He knows what Phyſick is moſt proper to work on that particular evil Humour which does moſt abound in us: Or if it be a *complication of Diſtempers*, he has his *compound Medicines*, and knows when and in what quantity to give

give them, how often to repeat them, what our needs require and our ſtrength will bear. What is but barely neceſſary to free the clogg'd Spirits of one Man, will utterly ſink another. He *hath taught the Husband-man diſcretion* to deal with every ſort of Grain according to its nature. The ſolid Corn muſt be bruiſed with a Cart-wheel of Iron, or the Hoof of an Horſe brought over it; but the Fitches and Cummin are beat with a Rod only, becauſe being of a more tender texture, it can't bear a rougher uſage. Now *he that formed the Eye, ſhall not he ſee?* He is *a God of Judgment*; *bleſſed are all they that wait for him* and can calmly refer all their Affairs unto him. Had we the management of them our ſelves, or ſhould he conſult our fooliſh Fancies, and irregular Cravings, we ſhould quickly be undone.

Iſa. 28. 26. 27. 28.

Thou art, it may be, importunately crying for a larger Portion of the things of this life; but little knoweſt or conſidereſt how ſo large a Sail and ſo great a Gale of Wind would quickly over-ſet thy little Veſſel; from how much Pride, Inſolence, Forgetfulneſs of God; from how many ſtrong Temptations and Luſts, which would corrupt and drown thee in Perdition, God mercifully preſerves thee by denying thee what thou doſt ſo eagerly deſire. Thou art murmuring, why is this

this Breach made on my Family; impatiently calling, when will this Pain and Disease be removed from my Body; this Cloud taken off from my Tabernacle? Whereas hereby it may be thou art quickned to Prayer, Self-examination, humbling thy Soul before God, living on the Promises, feeding on that Bread which endures to everlasting Life, making thy Calling and Election sure: Whereas if thy Burthen were presently removed as thou wouldest have it, if thou hadst the Temptations of Plenty and Ease, thou wouldest prove quite another Creature, forget God and thy self, be negligent in thy walk, contract abundance of Guilt, lose thy eternal Bliss, and make way for everlasting Sorrows. For tho' an *Astronomer* gazes most intently upon the Heavens when 'tis clear, a *Christian*, generally speaking, does most steadily look up when 'tis cloudy weather.

'Tis an excellent provision God has made in his Covenant, that he *will choose our Inheritance for us*, and assign the portion of our Cup: for we are *Minors*, and want discretion to choose for our selves. 'Tis our happiness, that our heavenly Father is not like fond and foolish earthly Parents, to forbear or give off chastising us when 'tis necessary, because of our crying; or give us sharp Knives when his Chil-

Children roar for 'em, becauſe they look bright and dazzling in their Eyes.

How paſſionately did *David* deſire the life of his Infant begotten in Adultery! He cried as if he himſelf had been the little ſick Child. But had his Prayers been heard, that Son of his, as long as he had lived, would have been a viſible Monument of his Sin and Shame: and the Kingdom might have been embroil'd about the Succeſſion by the bold Attempts of the ſprightly and daring Youth: For conſidering how he came into the World, according to the natural courſe of ſecond Cauſes, there would have been a great deal of heat and flame in his Conſtitution. Crafty Polititians, mutinous Officers, his being *born* in lawful Wedlock, the point of his own Sword, and actual poſſeſſion of the Crown in any Country, would have wiped off all Defects, and have *Legitimated his Title*, how ſpurious ſoever he himſelf was. The Controverſie would not have been ſo amicably decided as one of the like nature, tho' ſomewhat different too, was between *Xerxes*, who was begotten after his Father came to the Throne, and his elder Brethren who were born before. But God in mercy cut off the life of the Child, and thereby cut away the occaſion of the quarrel, and prevented a great deal of evil

by

by kindly contradicting the importunate Prayers of a fond Parent.

V. Another Instance of the wise Order of the Covenant is this, *viz.* God will not let us know before hand what he will do with us as to temporal Affairs. We can sometimes indeed look a little, and *'tis but a little*, before us, as to the turns that he will make. Our Knowledge in this matter is like our *Prophetical* Glasses, Barometers and Thermometers, that will show us the change of the Weather, hot or cold, foul or fair, for *a day* before hand, or so; tho' even in that too they are not infallible. But if we pretend to look more forward into Futurity, we render our selves as ridiculous as our *Monthly Prognosticators*, who would be thought to be more *subtil* and penetrating than that Element with which they pretend so intimate a converse: But certainly they are not the *Familiars* of him who is stiled *the Prince of the power of the Air*; for Experience shews us, that their bold Conjectures are lighter than the Wind and Vanity it self. V.

Close by the *Ark of the Covenant*, wherein are the two Tables of the Law, there is a *Pot of Manna* to feed us, and a *Rod* to correct us according as we observe or break the divine Precepts. But both of them

them are within the *Veil*, in the *Holieſt of all*, whither it is not lawful (or poſſible) for the People, yea or any of the *Prieſts* to enter, but only for him who is after the *Order of Melchizedech*, *Chriſt* I mean, who is *Prieſt* and *King* too, and hath *power over all fleſh*. Nor is it fit that any other ſhould: As will appear if theſe three following Particulars be conſidered.

1. Did we certainly fore-know future Events, it would diſorder the Affairs of this World and break the peace of our lives. This would be the fruit of it, whither we conſider the *Evils* that ſhall befal us, or the *Good* that ſhall come to us.

Conſider how it would be if we certainly fore-knew all the *Evils* that ſhall befal us. A Man could have no heart to breed up his Child, or take any pleaſure in it for ſo much as one day, if he were ſure (what it may be is determin'd) the pretty young blooming Tree while 'tis crown'd with beautiful Bloſſoms, ſhall be ſlowly ſawn aſunder by a lingring Diſeaſe, or ſuddenly torn up by the Roots with a violent Blaſt.

A Man would never be able to ſolace himſelf with the lovely Wife of his Youth, if he knew before, that after ſhe had lain a few Years in *his* Boſom, ſhe ſhould be remo-

removed into *Abraham*'s. Could we diſtinctly foreſee what it may be will come to paſs, ſuch a day I ſhall be cheated of part of my Eſtate, loſe another Limb of it by Fire or by Theives, have a great many very long and ſharp fits of Feaver or Cholick, Gout or Stone, with a long *&c.* of other Calamities which it may be will fall upon us before we are gathered to our Fathers; it were enough to craze us. Were a Man at once to ſee the Table covered with thoſe cruel Plaiſters that muſt be laid on, and the whole Room filled with all the nauſeous and tormenting Potions of Phyſick that he muſt take in one fit of Sickneſs, the very ſight of them would antidate the Calamity and make him Sick before the time; and as many as they are, there would be need of making a great addition to the mighty ſtore; more Cordials to be ſure would be requiſite. Had we a ſure Proſpect of all our Calamities, we ſhould be continually prying how near the black Cloud does approach; nicely calculating how many Minutes it would be e'er the lighted *Bomb* towring in the Air would light and break upon our Heads, neglecting preſent Duty, and not able to taſte our preſent Comforts, being utterly diſpirited by the fear of future Events, which we ſhould be gazing after in a diſtracted manner. We

may

may judge how it would be with us in this caſe, by conſidering how much we have been diſorder'd, how drooping our Spirits, what Hurries, Agonies and Convulſions we have been caſt into; how very unfit for any Duty, Civil or Religious, when we have had the near view of any great very probbaly approaching Evil. Yet then we had this to relieve us, that the black ſwelling Cloud juſt as it was opening to pour down the Storm on our guilty Heads might be blown off by a ſudden Wind; as ſometimes (God be praiſed) it has been,

But it may be ſome of you will ſay, We would not foreſee the *Evil* that ſhall befal us; yet we would be glad to foreknow all the *Good* that ſhall come to us. But we don't think nor ſpeak wiſely in this matter. For even *this* too were enough to ſpoil the Comfort of our Lives, as will appear from the three following Particulars.

(1.) It may be but a little ſhare of the good things of this Life that is deſigned for us: At leaſt in compariſon of what we covet, aim at, and proudly think we may juſtly challenge as due to our *Character* and mighty *Deſerts*. Thereupon how ſhould we vex our ſelves becauſe we have ſo ſmall a Lot, and never take the Comfort of that little, tho' it be, and becauſe

cauſe it is our *All.* We ſhould be fuller and not eat that poor ſprinkling of Fruit that is ſcatter'd on the lower Boughs that e'en touch the Ground whereon we ſtand; becauſe we can't climb up higher, perch on the top of the Tree, and glut our ſelves with the fairer and larger Cluſters which grow on the uppermoſt Branches.

(2.) Hereby much of the ſweetneſs of the Mercy would be loſt. *When the Lord turned back our Captivity, we were like Men that dream*; we could hardly believe our Senſes, or be perſwaded we were awake: *Then was our Mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with ſinging.* The ſuddenneſs, the ſurpriſing manner in doing what they never looked for gave a new reliſh to the Mercy, and higher Accent to their Praiſes. We have nice Palates, and a ſickly Stomach; and did we know what Proviſion in particular was made for us, had we the continual ſmell of the Meat in our Noſtrils while 'tis getting ready for us, we ſhould have but little Appetite to it, find but little reliſh in it when 'tis ſet before us.

(3.) We can't fore-know many of the Comforts of Life, without fore-knowing that we muſt labour under the contrary Evils. For a very conſiderable part of our happineſs lies in ſupport under, and deliverance from Miſery after we have felt

the ſting of it, it may be too, for a conſiderable time. There is not a more ſenſible repreſentation of the pleaſure of Heaven on this ſide of it, than for a Man after he has long lain under racking Pain to feel perfect ſudden Eaſe. This is like that ſudden happy turn which thoſe Saints ſhall have who are found at the ſecond coming of Chriſt, whoſe vile Bodies ſhall be changed into glorious ones in the twinkling of an Eye. If I would fore-know the great mercy of a ſuddenly reſtored Eaſe, I muſt fore-know that I am to labour under the foregoing Pains which uſher it in, and render it ſo very pleaſant: For 'tis the Sting that makes the Honey. We would not fore-know the Evil we are to endure; why then we muſt not fore-know the Good that we are to enjoy; for the knowledge of the one can't be without the knowledge of the other; no more than a Man can know the length of the Day in any Climate, without underſtanding that of the Night alſo.

That's the *Firſt* thing, that 'tis for our Intereſt that we are kept in the dark as to future Events, whither evil or good, becauſe the fore-knowledge of either would diſorder the affairs of this World, and utterly break the peace of our Lives. But beſides this,

2dly. 'Tis

2. 'Tis necessary it should be so for the bright'ning and assistance of our Graces. For suppose we are in *Adversity*; our *Patience*, *Fortitude*, *Steadiness* and *Constancy* in cleaving to God, our *Resignation* to his Will, chearful *Dependance* on him, *&c.* will be the *brighter*, because we can still hold on tho' we walk in a Cloud and are not able to see how far it is to the end of the narrow and miry Lane, wherein we are beset with Briars and Thorns on both sides tearing our Cloaths, and rending our Flesh. It may be a very *long* one for ought I can tell; and yet I am not out of Breath or Patience: And yet for ought I know it may be a very *short* one too; and then the deep way may open into a pleasant and spacious Plain; which thought may be a very great help to the fore-going Duties, and a good Means to prevent a fretful and impatient behaviour.

On the other hand, suppose I am in *Prosperity*, still I had need to keep close with God, that I may always retain the Comforts of Innocence, or at least of Pardon, and a good Conscience, whatever I lose if the Tide should turn, as I don't know how soon it may: For if it should not run out for many Hours according to the natural Course of things; yet a stiff Gale may suddenly drive the Waters out, and leave

the Channel empty. I had need ſtill to ſit looſe toward this World, and long for Heaven, where alone I ſhall be out of the reach of all danger. Tho' I ſit pleaſantly under the ſhade of a well-grown Tree, I had need to have a care I don't fall aſleep there: For I know not how ſoon a ſtormy Wind may blow down all the ripe Fruit, then that by its fall may ſorely wound my Head, wherewith I vainly hoped to have filled my Mouth; that which loads and adorns the Tree may cover the Ground and rot upon it; or be pick'd up and ſtoln away by others with whom *de facto* is the ſame with *de jure*, and who have no other Title than what actual Poſſeſſion gives them; vain Man that thou art, who doſt look ſo big, becauſe of the droves of Admirers who croud after thee, and hang like Bees upon thy Lips every time thou openeſt 'em in publick! Thy Wit that now ſparkles like generous Wine in a Glaſs, may grow dead and flat, as that does by length of time. Thou mayeſt loſe thy Credit, or that Delivery of thine, which it may be is one of the beſt Properties that belong to thee. For many times 'tis not the richneſs of the Senſe, depth of Matter, or elegancy of the Compoſure (of which the Vulgar have little taſte) but the ſweetneſs of the Tune, or the melodious Voice

of him that ſings, or the pleaſant ſound of the Inſtrument on which he plays, that is the moſt charming; and when the Organ or the Breath is crackt, where art *thou*, and where are *they*? Or the voluble humour may change; or a more acceptable Man may ariſe: And a *brighter* Body will as certainly Eclipſe thy ſhining luſtre as an *Opake* and dark one can poſſibly do. Who knows but he that ſwaggers in the head of a Troop, may be ſhot in the Face by the open Enemy, or in the Back by a pretended Friend, and be trampled under the Feet of thoſe that are behind? Who can tell how ſoon the ſtrutting Bubble may break; (which is the more likely, becauſe it ſwells ſo extravagantly) and that which ſo proudly floats on the top of the Water, may ſlide into the common level? Thou hadſt need therefore to *walk humbly with thy God*, and carry it modeſtly towards thy Brethren.

3. God hath reſerv'd to himſelf the fore-knowledge of future contingent Events, as his own peculiar Prerogative. *'Tis not for you to know the times and Seaſons which the Father hath put in his own power.* 'Tis an incommunicable Flower of his Imperial Crown; and he who wears that may challenge the whole. God himſelf appeals to this as the Teſt Acts 1.7.

whereby the true Deity may be known and distinguisht from all false pretended ones. *Shew us the things that are to come, that we may know that ye are Gods.* But he will not let us know 'em, because he would have us to understand that we are not *Gods* to fore-know Good and Evil (which was the first Temptation that ruin'd us all;) but that we are *Men*; whose Minds as well as their Hands are not able to reach very far.

Isa. 41. 22.

Briefly. There are two great Excellencies of our Nature, which we can never be sufficiently thankful for; *viz.* Knowledge and Memory. *Memory* I say, that most valuable Talent, which none but Fools slight and neglect; without which thou couldst not give a wise Answer to any one Question, nor follow thy Trade: For how couldst thou sell thy Commodities, if thou didst not remember that thou hadst them, where thou laidst them, what they cost thee, and what thou canst afford them for. All the other Powers of thy Soul without this would signifie nothing; and all Religion would be at an end, for that's expres'd by *remembring thy* Creator.

We are not a little indebted to God for the two contrary Imperfections, *viz.* *Forgetfulness of what is past*, and *Ignorance of what is to come.* A Man may feel that he

he hath loſt his Bloud and Spirits, which may make him feeble a good while after. But if he had always as quick a ſenſe of Pain as he had when the cruel Inſtrument was firſt run into his tender Fleſh, what an uneaſie miſerable life would he lead. Or if a Man had a diſtinct view at once of all the Changes he muſt run through before he is gather'd to his Fathers, the odd (as we ſhould eſteem it) and *party colour'd* Object, wherein are ſuch ſurpriſing mixtures of black and white, dark and bright, fair and bloudy, would greatly affright us and break our Hearts; and the ſwift turns of the Wheel would make our Heads run round as faſt. But God has in mercy hid theſe things from our Eyes, and lock'd them up in his own Boſom. Aſtronomers indeed have undoubted Rules whereby they can predict the Eclipſes of the heavenly Bodies, when they ſhall happen, how long they ſhall laſt, when the Sun and Moon ſhall emerge out of them. But no Man can foreſee how often the dark Shadow ſhall obſcure himſelf or his Neighbour, nor how few or how many Minutes the gloomy covering ſhall laſt, God having kindly hid this dangerous Secret from us: In which reſpect his Covenant is wiſely and well order'd, which was the fifth Particular.

VI. VI. Tho' meer Love be not the only, yet 'tis always the predominant Principle in all God's Providences towards his Covenant People. I muſt open this in both the Branches of it.

1. All their Temporal Mercies are *wont* to be the Effects and Pledges too of his ſpecial Love. They are given *together with Chriſt.* *For* (as the Apoſtle ſays) *he that ſpared not his own Son, how ſhall he not together with him freely give us all things?* They are the performance of the Promiſe. For he hath ſaid, *Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of God, and the righteouſneſs thereof, and then all theſe things ſhall be added to you.* This is that which ſweetens a good Man's temporal Enjoyments, and gives him another kind of taſte and reliſh of them than other Men have of the ſame Mercies for Kind and Subſtance. This is like a very curious Engraving on Braſs or Iron, that renders it worth a great deal of Silver and Gold. Whereas now the Proſperity of wicked Men is oftentimes the effect of God's deepeſt Diſpleaſure: Like a rich Garment that has a ſubtil Poyſon lodg'd in it, which *adorns* the Body, but *kills* it too. Thus it was with the Iſraelites; they had *fleſh rained* upon them *as duſt, and feather'd fowl* like the *ſand of the Sea, but while the meat was*

Rom. 8. 32.

Pſal. 78. 27, &c.

yet

yet in their Mouths, the wrath of God came upon them and slew the fattest of them. But at best, their worldly Comforts flow but from that common Love that feeds young *Lions* and *Ravens*. Their fairest Mercies are but like those Medals which a a Prince promiscuously scatters with a negligent Hand among the vile and common Rabble on his Marriage-day to shew his own Royal Bounty; but his Picture does he give to his Spouse, as a Pledge that he intends to bestow himself upon her. *God, even our own God shall bless us*; because he is our *own God* from whom they come, this gives a greater value to his Blessings, as well as an assurance of the continuance of them and an addition to them, when and while they will prove to us Blessings indeed. How pleasantly may a holy Man view his narrow and scanty Provisions. I have but a few Crumbs indeed, but then they fall from the Childrens Bread, and are an earnest that I shall sit down at the Table of my Father in Heaven: A few handfuls of Meal, or it may be of Pulse only, and a Cup of cold Water, together with Heaven, is a rich fair Portion for any of the Sons of God; much more for me, who am not worthy to be called his hired Servant, to have the meanest Place, the lowest Office in his House and Family, yea, or to wash

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the Feet of the meaneſt of my Lord's Servants.

But then obſerve, that I ſaid Temporal Bleſſings are *wont* to be given as Effects and Pledges of God's ſpecial Love. 'Tis ordinarily ſo. But there are ſome caſes wherein 'tis otherwiſe; *viz.* When we are over eager after them, or over fond of them. We *muſt* have this or that. God does not give, but we ſnatch an Eſtate out of his hand, procuring it to our ſelves, or keeping it by unlawful means. And when he would remove the Mercy, we hold it faſt, *can't and won't* bring our Hearts to reſign; then 'tis got and kept by us to our hurt, and it always tends to our ſorrow. Indeed 'tis fit it ſhould be embitter'd to us to cure us of theſe Fits which are ſo dangerous; for the more effectual purging out ſo very untoward a Temper, ſo *unbecoming* a *Creature*, and much more a *Saint*, which is in truth no better than a ſpiritual Idolatry and Adultery. But then (which brings me to the Second Particular)

2. This and all other Afflictions, tho' they proceed from a mixture of Anger and Love, yet Love is the predominant Principle that lies at the bottom of all, and runs thro' the whole.

I do not say, that *all* the Afflictions of good Men proceed from *Anger*; because I do not forget the case of *Job*; nor that passage of our Saviour concerning him that was born blind; *This Man hath not sinn'd nor his Parents*, but therefore did this Calamity befal him, *that the works of God might be made manifest in him.* Which does not imply, that he was not tainted with original Sin. He that draws that Inference from the words, is blinder than that poor Creature. This does no more follow from those words, than it does, that his Parents were free from all actual Transgressions. For 'tis said, *they* had not sinned any more than he. The plain meaning of the Passage is, that it was not an eye to any particular Sin in them or him that was the cause of that Affliction; but the Evil was laid upon him for no other end than this, that there might be an occasion for God to glorifie himself by working a miraculous Cure upon him.

But then I must add; That even in this case a good Man will be very jealous of himself, for fear that some sin lies at the bottom of the bitter Cup, tho' it be so thick and muddy that he can't look so far as clearly to discern it. He will therefore cry out with holy *Job*, *Make me to know my transgression and my sin; and if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more.*

For

For moſt uſually 'tis for ſome Sin or other that God ſtrikes : And then Afflictions proceed from a *mixture of Anger and Love*, but *Love is the predominant Principle.*

From a mixture of *Anger*. Not that of an *Enemy* indeed which flows from bitter Hatred and fiery Revenge, and is accompanied with Rigour and utmoſt Severity, that intends nothing but ſelf-ſatisfaction, the hurt and ruin of another. This is Pſal. 69. 24. called *wrathful Anger* by the Pſalmiſt, and is what he deprecates. *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger* ; which he explains in the very next words, *nor chaſten me in thy hot diſpleaſure.* For God *conſiders our frame*, and remembers his own Promiſe, that *in meaſure he will debate with us* and *ſtay his rough wind in the day of his Eaſt wind.*

But then there is *the anger of a Father*, which is guided by Wiſdom, tempered by Love, and intends the good of his offending Child, though he will uſe ſharp ſevere Methods when 'tis neceſſary in order thereunto. And he who does not apprehend when God Chaſtizes him for his Follies, that this proceeds from his Fatherly Diſpleaſure, entertains a wild Notion contrary to plain Scripture, clear Reaſon, and the common Senſe of all Holy Men in all Ages.

Yet

Yet however, *Love* is the Predominant Principle. This is more eaſily proved than heartily believed, when we are in the School of Affliction. But whatever a froward unbelieving Heart may ſuggeſt, 'tis a plain certain Truth, as will appear if we conſider the *Mitigations* of 'em as to length or ſharpneſs, the inward *ſupports* which God vouchſafes under them, together with the Gracious *Ends* of God in them. For Holy Men have their cool Breezes when the Sun ſtrikes hotteſt upon their Heads, that fan their Faces, and revive their Spirits. The unpleaſant and fiery Drops are divided into ſmall Parcels, given at diſtant times, and are diluted by being ſcattered up and down in a large Vehicle; whereas otherwiſe, they would Scorch our Mouths, Burn up our Entrails, Embitter and Enflame our Spirits. But God is Good and Wiſe, his deſign in all being to purge away Sin, to make us partakers of his Holineſs, and prepare us for Heaven. The working of the Phyſick indeed at firſt generally makes the ill Humors fly about the Body, and the Patient the more Sick; but Strength and Health comes at laſt. The firſt ſtroke or two beats the Veſſel more out of ſhape, and makes it look more uncomely than it did before, but repeated blows bring it to a better faſhion. The toſſing and tumbling

of

of Liquor, puts it into a Ferment, and makes it more muddy ; but in a little while, the dregs are carried off, and it runs the finer for it : The preſent *chaſtning which is not joyous but grievous*, becauſe of the pain it puts us to, and the corruption it accidentally awakens in us ; but *afterward it bringeth forth the peaceable fruits of Righteouſneſs*, when for ſome time they have *been exerciſed* thereby. So true is that which is written, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chaſten.* Whereupon Holy Men when the fit of Paſſion has been over, have heartily bleſs'd God for their Afflictions, look'd on them as Tokens of Love, as Marks of Adoption, admiring his condeſcending Goodneſs in Chaſtiſing them for their good. And herein is the Admirable manifold Wiſdom of God ſeen, who can carry on two ſeemingly contrary deſigns at once, *Judgment and Mercy* ; as he apparently did in the caſe of *Joſiah* : who ſinfully oppoſed *Pharaoe-Neco*, who truly affirmed he had a Commiſſion from Heaven for the Expedition he had undertook ; the truth of which, good *Joſiah* never examined into, as he might have done by the Prophets of the Lord who were at hand ; but he raſhly Marches out againſt him, Fights againſt God in Fighting againſt the *Egyptian* King, whereby he loſt his Life

Life, and forfeited his Title to the promiſe, that he ſhould *go to his Grave in Peace.* For to ſay as ſome have indiſcreetly done, that he went to his *Grave in Peace*, when he Died a Violent untimely Death in *War*, is to ſpeak Contradictions, and ſay Darkneſs is Light. Here was a Righteous Judgment that he was thus cut off. But much greater Mercy, for he was hereby taken away *from the evil to come*, and ſafely lodged before the *over-flowing Scourge* covered the Land.

Some ſhort Application of what has been now delivered, ſhall put an end to this Sermon. And

1. From that particular, that *God has reſerv'd the whole judgment of this affair*, viz. *Temporal Mercies to himſelf, and is wont to act accordingly*; let us be perſwaded, not Sinfully and Fooliſhly to torment our ſelves, as to what is *paſt*, or what is *yet to come*. One would think there ſhould be little need of preſſing this; but he who ſo thinks, muſt be a great Stranger to the workings of Humane Nature under Affliction.

(1.) As to what is *paſt*. In all the Calamities that have already befallen us, the Judgment and Will of God is declared. By unmeaſurable Sorrows and Vexations, we do in effect ſay, *God is of one mind*,

mind, and we of another. But God's will is fulfilled, and thy will is croſſed; thy Sheaf muſt bow down to his, for his will not ſtoop to thine. *He is of one mind, and who can turn him?* and his Power is Infinite, and who can reſiſt him, or undo what he hath wrought? what would we have? would we find flaws in his Proceedings; bring a *Writ of Error*, and reverſe his Sentence after Execution? But if the *Iniquity* of this Carriage does not make us bluſh, one would think the *Folly* of it ſhould make us deſiſt. How much ſoever *David* might be to blame in the former part of his Carriage, yet his Example is worthy of our imitation as to the latter part of it, when he ſaid, *while the Child was yet alive, I faſted and wept; for I ſaid, who can tell whither God will be gracious to me, that the Child may live: but now he is Dead, wherefore ſhould I faſt? can I bring him back again? I ſhall go to him, but he ſhall not return to me.* Our Modern Philoſophers, tell us of a *Plaſtick Power* reſiding none knows where, very ſlily lodged in ſome portion of matter to reproduce the ſame Body after it has been deſtroyed. Yea, *Kircherus* is ſaid to have been able by a gentle Heat to raiſe in well-cloſed Vials, the perfect reſemblances of Plants that had been deſtroyed by Fire. A Flaming

Boyl of the Poſſib. of the Reſurrection. p. 10.

ing Love will do somewhat like this; often bring to our Minds the lovely Idea of a dear departed Relative: but the warmest affection can't make the most beautiful Plant in our Garden spring up again when once it has been cut down and reduced to Ashes. We may water those Ashes, but can't quicken them with all our Tears; nor weep them out of the Grave: tho' we may weep our selves into it. *Why* therefore *art thou* thus sinfully *cast down, O my Soul; why art thou thus* vainly *disquieted within me?*

(2) Let us not sinfully and foolishly disquiet our selves about *Future* Events; seeing *God has denied the certain foreknowledge of them* to us. *Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof,* and we can't be sure what Evils will be on the Earth to morrow, nor where we may be before the day dawns. Calamities that we think are hovering over us may be like Birds flying in great Flocks so as to darken the Air, that make a grievous chattering and a hideous noise, and yet may pass us by, never lighting upon our Heads. Thus it has been; for how often have we frighted our selves with imaginary Evils, and startled at the sight of those Ghosts which were nothing but airy Phantomes, our own Creatures?

Let us see to it that we stand on good Terms with God, mind our present Duty that lies plain before us, and not lose our time in gazing about after future Events which are quite out of our sight. Let us be careful for nothing so much as to be of the number of them whom God careth for; casting all our Burdens on him, throwing all anxious Cares off from our selves: When thus the Troubler is cast out, the Comforter will come in, as Light succeeds in the room of Darkness. Then shall we better know what that Promise means, than Words can inform us, *The peace of God which passeth all Understanding, shall keep your Hearts and Minds thro' Jesus Christ.* Keep them as a strong hold is by a numerous Garrison, as the word φρουρήσει in the original signifies; which may sometimes be besieged, assaulted and Bomb'd too, but yet is seasonably reliev'd and shall be preserv'd from falling into the Enemies hand.

2. From that point that *all our Chastisements flow from a mixture of fatherly Anger, but from Love also, as the predominant Principle*; learn to receive his Rebukes with humble Reverence, and beware of quarrelling with him, or complaining of him. Consider he is a *provoked* Father, but yet a *Father* still; thou art a Child under the Rod, and tho' a disobedient one,

one, yet a *Child* ſtill. *Forget not* therefore the *Exhortation*, or (as the word alſo ſignifies) the *Conſolation*, *that ſpeaks to you as to Sons*, *My Son deſpiſe not thou the chaſt'ning of the Lord*, *neither faint when thou art rebuked of him.* The evil Arrow wherewith thy dear Friend was ſlain, and thou ſo deeply wounded, did not move at random, but God guided it by his Eye, and 'twas ſhot by his hand. Not ſo much as one Saint was ever taken up into Heaven without a particular ſpecial order of their Father and ours, who dwells there whither they are gone before, and we are following after. *All the ways of the Lord are Mercy and Truth to them* who are *in Covenant* and *keep it* with him. He is continually with them here upon Earth, and they ſhall ever be with him in Heaven. *Amen*, and *Amen*,

SERMON VII.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made with me an everlaſting Covenant, order'd in all things and ſure: for this is all my ſalvation and all my deſire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THE Doctrine now before us is this, *viz.*

Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Intereſt in it will ſupport a Man under the moſt afflictive Evils, whether Perſonal or Family ones.

In the managing of this Point, I have opened to you the Nature of the Covenant of Grace; and then I came to ſpeak of the Properties of it. I fixed on one, namely, that 'tis *ordered in all things.* I have explained the meaning of the word, namely, that all the parts of it are ſo adjuſted, that they do naturally and effectually tend to the promoting and attaining

of the great Ends of the Covenant, which are the Glory of God, the Honour of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Duty, Comfort and Happineſs of Man.

I have endeavoured to prove the Truth of the thing, to ſhew that 'tis ſo.

1. With reſpect to the Mediator and Surety of it, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

2. With reference to the Bleſſings that are contained and promiſed in it, which are Spiritual, Eternal and Temporal. Of each of theſe I have *particularly* diſcourſed.

I muſt now ſpeak of theſe three ſorts of Bleſſings as *conjunctly* taken, and ſhew you, that 'tis neceſſary that God ſhould promiſe all of theſe Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal Bleſſings, and that if any of theſe had been left out, it would not have been a Covenant well and wiſely ordered.

For the proof of this there are three Generals I ſhall take into Conſideration.

I. I. I ſhall ſhew what a blemiſh it would have been to the Covenant of Grace, if *temporal* Mercies had not been promis'd in it.

'Tis true indeed, Temporal Bleſſings make but a ſmall Figure in the Covenant; their Glory is no Glory, becauſe all the Excellency is ſwallowed up in the greater Glory of Spiritual and Eternal ones. But yet however, Temporal Bleſ-

ſings

ſings are of that ſignificancy too, that it would have been a very imperfect Covenant if they had been wholly left out. They are like the Hairs of our Heads or the Nails of our Hands, which are of little value if compared with the Head or Heart, or any other vital part; but yet how uncomely would the moſt beautiful Face appear if there were not one Hair on it; or the fineſt Hand without Nails. Tho' Temporal Bleſſings are little in themſelves, yet the Covenant had not been wiſely ordered if they had been wholly left out. This will appear if you conſider,

1. This would have diſcouraged our Faith and Hope as to Eternal Bleſſings, Graces and Duties, that we are not ſo very ready at, or ſo very forward to.

Our week and feeble Hopes would be checked by ſuch a procedure as this, as the tender Bud is nipt by the cold of the Night, or the Froſt of the Morning. God doth argue *affirmatively* from the greater to the leſs. *He that ſpared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things.* But our Hearts would have argued backwards, *negatively*; from denying leſſer Mercies to ſtrong Doubts concerning greater ones. How ready ſhould we have been to cry out, How Rom. 8. 32.

can I believe that ever God will be ſo kind to my Soul, when he hath altogether neglected this Body of mine? What tho' it be the meaner part, yet 'tis an eſſential part of my ſelf. As by Soul I am diſtinguiſhed from Brutes, ſo by my Body I am diſtinguiſhed from Angels. The wants and Neceſſities of my Body claim a part of my Care, and I cannot but have a very quick and lively ſenſation of them. Now if he hath not ſpoken concerning a few Crumbs of Bread, or a few drops of Water, or a little Cloathing to feed and cover my Body; how ſhall I ever believe that he hath that wonderful kindneſs for me, as at laſt to receive me to Heaven, and ſet a weighty Crown on my Head? How can it enter into my Heart, that God ſhould kindly receive and entertain me when I come home, who hath not that reſpect for me to remit me my neceſſary Charges on the Road.

2. If Temporal Mercies had not been promiſed in the Covenant of Grace, we ſhould have had no patience to continue our appointed time in this World, nor any Heart to ſerve God in our Generations.

Afflictions do, and according to the natural and neceſſary courſe of things, muſt befal every Man in this World. And how would our Souls have bent under the heavy load, and our Spirits have been

ſowred

ſowred within us. We ſhould have grown ſullen and been apt to have ſaid; Lord, take away my Life, for 'tis better for me to dye then to live under my preſent Circumſtances. Nothing can calm the troubled Soul ſo much as this Conſideration; I am under Circumſtances, as black and melancholly as they can well be, but the Potion as bitter as it was choſen for me and put into my Hand by my God in Covenant, my wife and beſt Friend. This was appointed for me by God, who truly underſtands what is beſt for me, and would have dealt more kindly with me if it had been for my greater good. The Spirit of a Man is apt to be out of frame when he feels the weight of incumbent Afflictions; but ſuch a thought ſet home by the Spirit of God, will bring us into order again: Like the Ears of Corn that hang down their heads by a violent guſt of Wind; but when that is over, they lift up their heads again.

God knows our need, therefore hath taken Temporal Bleſſings within the compaſs of the Covenant; which if he had not ſo done, it would have been a ſtrong temptation to Unbelief, and have rendered us altogether unapt for the Service of God and our Generations.

II. II. I am to ſhew what a Blemiſh it would have been to the Covenant of Grace, what a defective thing it would have been, had not *Spiritual* Mercies been promiſed in it.

This will clearly appear if you do but conſider the three following things.

1. If Spiritual Bleſſings had not been promiſed in the Covenant of Grace, we had been uncapable of thoſe high Duties and noble Privileges that the Covenant People of God are deſigned for in this Life; which are in ſhort, ſerving God and enjoying Communion with God.

This is the End of our Life and Being, and the ſweetneſs and comfort of Life in this World. Now if Spiritual Bleſſings had not been promiſed in the Covenant, we had been uncapable of *ſerving* God, which is the End of Life, the buſineſs for which we came into the World, and without which it were not worth our while to continue a Moment here. For how could we have done any good Works, if by Grace we had not been *created* as well as *fore-ordained* to them? Can a Man gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thiſtles? Can a corrupt Fountain ſend forth ſweet and wholſome Springs? No more can an unſanctified Nature perform any good Actions, that ſhall be acceptable and well-pleaſing unto God.

Beſides,

Beſides, without Spiritual Bleſſings, we ſhould have been uncapable of *enjoying* God, or of having any Fellowſhip with him, which is the Flame and Life of Life. *How can two walk together* in a friendly manner, *except they are agreed?* Eſpecially when they are *ſo* diſagreeable to one another, as a holy God and an impure and carnal Creature. He muſt have more then an *infinite* Power that can reconcile Contradictions: for even the Almighty himſelf cannot do this. He cannot make things that are repugnant in their own nature hang together, much leſs lovingly embrace each other. Sooner may the Eaſt and Weſt meet together in one Point, then God and an unholy Soul meet together in a way of Love and Peace. *Amos* 3. 3.

2. Without Spiritual Bleſſings, all Temporal ones would have been abuſed by us to God's diſhonour and our own ruin.

We are a ſort of miſerable Creatures, that cannot do or bear any thing unleſs it be given to us from above. We cannot bear Adverſity, no nor Proſperity neither. The cold Winter, were it not for our Cloaths and the Fire, would benumb our Spirits and freeze us to death: And the heat of Summer, were it not for the cool Breezes of Wind and the Shade, would exhauſt our Spirits. Of the two 'tis by far the hardeſt to endure, in a becoming

coming manner, a great deal of Proſperity: To know how to *abound* with the Apoſtle, as well as how to *want*. This is plain from the many Cautions left on Record in the Word of God to them that are rich in this World. *Take heed to your* ſelves. *Beware when thou haſt eaten and art full, that thou doſt not forget God* and thy ſelf too. The ſad experience of all Ages hath ſhewed us, that abundance of perſons have been corrupted and ruined by a great deal of Proſperity. They have rode out many a Storm, and have periſhed at laſt in the midſt of a Calme. 'Tis very plain, that abundance of the things of this World is but a great Snare without a proportionable meaſure of Wiſdom and Grace to improve it for the Glory of God, and for the ſpiritual and eternal welfare of our ſelves and others.

3. If Spiritual Bleſſings had not been promiſed in the Covenant of Grace, we had been uncapable of Eternal ones upon our departure out of this World.

Guilty Creatures can no more look a juſt holy and righteous God in the Face, eſpecially as he pours out all his Excellencies, and diſplays himſelf in Heaven, than ſore Eyes are able to bear the glittering Beams of the Sun when it ſhineth forth in its Meridian Glory. As ſoon may Darkneſs face the Light as a guilty Creature

ture behold the awful and majeſtick Countenance of God. An unſanctified and unrenewed Soul, if it could make a ſhift to crowd in at the Gates of the heavenly Paradiſe, he would be immediately driven out of it; the Cherubim and Seraphim would chaſe the Brute out of the holy place: Nay, he would voluntary run away from thence. He would not be able to endure the Company, nor bear the Work and Buſineſs of Heaven. How irkſome would it be for a Man that has none of the Image of God in his Soul, nor any Love to God in his Heart, to behold the holy God and Worſhip him to all Eternity. He would not find Heaven in Heaven, but it would be a place of Miſery and Torment to him.

III. If *Eternal* Bleſſings had not been contained in the Covenant of Grace, it had been a great blemiſh to it whatever other Bleſſings had been promiſed in it. III.

The promiſe of Heaven is the chief thing contain'd in the Covenant of Grace. *This is THE Promiſe that he hath promiſed us, even Eternal Life.* If you drop that you leave the main thing out, without which all the reſt were very little, yea, inſignificant and vain. *John 2. 25.*

This will appear if you conſider the two following things.

1. That

1. That the value of *Temporal* Mercies would have been but ſmall, and they would have been but ſorry things if God had not promiſed Eternal ones. For

1. 'Tis but a very ſmall ſhare and proportion of the things of this World that the generality of God's People ever enjoy.

(2.) Tho' they had never ſo great an abundance of them, yet if *this* were their *all*, God could be ſaid to be kind only to a *part* of them, and the worſer part, to their Bodies only, and not to their nobler and immortal Souls. What a Reflection would this have been on him who is ſtiled the *Father of our Spirits*, to have abandoned that which is his moſt peculiar Off-ſpring. Earthly Parents would never do ſo, and far be this from our Heavenly Father.

The things of this Life tho' heaped in never ſo great a Store on us, cannot improve our Spirits: Riches and Honours make no Man Wiſer or Better; but on the contrary, thro' the Corruption of Human Nature, thouſands of Men have been made more Wicked and Fooliſh by them. Nor can they ſatisfie or content our Spirits. Of all Men that ever lived on the Face of the Earth *Solomon* had the greateſt advantage to try the Experiment, to puſh things as far as they would go;

to ſee whither he could draw a true Elixer of Life from the things of this World; but on the contrary, he found nothing but Wind and Dregs at the bottom. Vanity of Vanity is the Sum Total. *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity and vexation of Spirit.*

(3.) We are expoſed to a World of Calamities, wherein the things of this World can yield us no Relief.

Suppoſe a Man were a *Univerſal Monarch*, and could extend his Empire and his Fame to the remoteſt parts of the Earth, yet might all the Peace and Comfort of his Life be broken by ten thouſand Accidents that might befal him. By bodily Sickneſs and Pain, by a little Wind pent up in his Bowels, or a melancholly Vapour flying up into his Head; by thorny Cares to ſecure his preſent Enjoyments; or by pale Fears, leaſt he ſhould be turned out of the Poſſeſſion by the treachery of pretended Friends, or the Malice of open Enemies; by the ſickneſs or wickedneſs of a Child; or the untimely death of a near Relation, that is as the apple of the Eye to a Man, or his own Soul; by trouble of Mind and terrors of Conſcience; by black Thoughts and ſlaviſh Fears of Hell and Ruin.

'Tis impoſſible to ſpend a whole Life without ſome or other of theſe, and which

which ſoever of theſe Miſeries thruſt their Sting into our Fleſh, may eaſily fill us with ſo much Pain as to ſwallow up the Pleaſure of other Comforts.

(4.) Suppoſe that all a Man's days ſhould paſs over without one black Cloud, yet however Death will come at laſt.

And, Lord, how ſorry a thing is this World to a dying Creature. The farther we draw off from any Object, the leſs doth it ſeem to our Eyes. The whole World is but a little *black Speck* to a Soul that is Sailing away, and hath begun to launch forth into the depths of Eternity.

'Tis true indeed, the Men of this World now call for Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and during their Health and Eaſe, theſe things are inſtead of God to them; as Braſs or Iron painted, or an empty Shell paſſes for Money among barbarous Nations: While times are calm and peaceable, Paper will paſs for Money, but when 'tis otherwiſe what an univerſal Cry is there for Specie. The things of this Life while we are in Health and Peace, wonderfully captivate our Affections; Men are apt to be mighty fond of them, and greatly contented with them; but when a dying Hour comes, we ſhall then find that nothing will do our Buſineſs but an Intereſt in the Favour of God, and in the Blood of Chriſt, and the Hope of Eter-

Eternal Life. Death may be made more bitter to us, when he ſhall come to pluck and tear us away all at once from our dear Enjoyments, and when all our Treaſures here below will not purchaſe one Inch of time, nor adjourn Death for a Moment when the appointed time is come.

Now lay all theſe things together, that the people of God have but little of the things of this Life; that if they had never ſo much of them they can only gratifie the worſer part of them, cannot improve or ſatisfie their Souls; that there are many Miſeries wherein the things of this World can yield them no relief; that they are all empty and hollow things when a dying Hour comes: And hence it follows, it had been a mighty Blemiſh in the Covenant of Grace, if Eternal Bleſſings had not been promiſed in it.

2. If there had been no promiſe of Eternal Bleſſings, the *Spiritual* Bleſſings of the Covenant had been little valuable.

This will appear if the following things be conſidered.

(1.) 'Tis Heaven that gives the chiefeſt value to all the Spiritual Bleſſings of the Covenant.

This is the main Jewel in the Crown of Life; all the other indeed, this being ſuppoſed, are like little ſparkling Gems,

that give a luſtre to the whole, but without this, they would be dark and contemptible things. Grace is a moſt deſirable Privilege, but chiefly on this account, becauſe 'tis the Pledge and beginning of Eternal Glory. Theſe are but rude Draughts, but imperfect Strokes. You take away the main thing out of Juſtification and Pardon, if you conſider it only as a Privilege whereby we are delivered from eternal Wrath; 'tis one of the bright Steps that leads to the Celeſtial Throne above, and therefore is chiefly valuable.

Adoption without this would be but an idle thing: For there is nothing done to the People of God in this World that doth in the leaſt anſwer and come up to that great Expreſſion of their being the *Children of God, and if Children then Heirs of God, and joint Heirs of Chriſt.*

Fellowſhip and Communion with God is a ſweet and moſt deſirable thing indeed, but 'tis chiefly on this account, that 'tis the Earneſt of what we ſhall have above; when we ſhall drink freely at the Fountain Head of thoſe pure Pleaſures, a few drops of which are ſo infinitely ſweet to our Taſte now.

'Tis this that lies at the bottom of peace of Conſcience, makes it flower up and run over into the joy of the Holy Ghoſt.

Ghoſt. *Being juſtified by Faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* That we ſhall hereafter be made partakers of it. And without this the main Spring that feeds the River would be ſtopped, and all the Streams would be dried up. Rom. 5. 2.

(2.) Not only ſo, but if there were no Eternal Mercies our Spiritual Bleſſings would but increaſe our Miſery.

How black and gloomy a Thought would it be, if there were a juſt occaſion for it, for a Child of God to be able to ſay thus with himſelf: The moral and legal Bar of acceſs to God is removed indeed; I have an immortal Spirit that is capable of ſeeing and enjoying God for ever if he pleaſes; I have had a little taſte of this that hath enkindled the deſires of my Soul after him; I have ſeen a Beam of his reconciled Face and Favour, and, O Lord, how tranſporting was it to my Soul, it was the bleſſed Light of Life: O that I could but ſee the bleſſed Face of my God clearer, and behold it for ever. God hath ſpoken ſuch things as hath raiſed my Hopes and confirmed my Faith: But after all there is no ſuch a place as Heaven; I may dye the next Moment, and in a few days I muſt dye, and then my Eyes will be cloſed in everlaſting Night and Darkneſs. I ſhall be capable

of enjoying God no more for ever, when a few days are rowled over my Head. O miſerable Creature that I am, if this were indeed ſo. Then the more holy any Man is, and the more improved in the divine Life, ſo much the more miſerable would he be; then to enjoy God which is his preſent Happineſs would be his Miſery, Darkneſs would ſhine out of Light, and nothing but Salt and bitter Waters would flow from the Fountain of Good.

But God be thanked, there is no room for ſuch melancholly Thoughts, Complaints, Suſpicions, or Doubts. God hath given the higheſt aſſurances of Glory, Honour and Immortality to all his People, the Covenant comprehends Eternal Bleſſings in it. *The Lord God is a Sun and a Shield, the Lord will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.* This is a Golden Chain of Mercies, the ſeveral Links of which do run into, and have connection with one another; take hold of the laſt and the reſt will follow. The Lord God will give Glory, the laſt and higheſt Mercy. Will he give Glory? then he muſt and will give Grace and further ſupplies of it; becauſe without Grace ſhe ſhall never enter into Glory. And if he will give Glory and Grace in order to it, then this bountiful Lord God will

Pſal. 84. 11.

will be a Sun and Shield: A Sun to direct, and a Shield to defend us round about, or elſe our many Enemies would prove our death and ruin. And if he will be and give all this to his People, then 'tis plain to demonſtration; that no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

A word or two by way of Application, and ſo I ſhall conclude at this time.

1. Be perſwaded to lay hold on this bleſſed Covenant of Grace, and do all that in you lies that your Children may do ſo too. By Prayers, by Inſtruction, by Counſel, by Admonition and holy Education, endeavour to bring them by their own perſonal conſent into the Covenant of Grace, into which you entered them in Infancy; and then you and they are happy beyond Expreſſion, and to all Eternity.

2. Let us live like thoſe that are Intereſted in this bleſſed Covenant.

The Moon is bright and fair, there are no Miſts and Clouds; its Body is of ſuch a contexture, as not to ſend forth any ſuch evil thing. But there is nothing like this in this lower World. Abundance of Vapours are ſteaming up every day, and no wonder they knit in Clouds and break forth in Thunder upon us, no wonder the

Air is ſometimes darkened and the Tempeſt ariſes. Sin is in us while we are in this World, and the black Vapour is proceeding forth every day, and no wonder if it be ſometimes Cloudy and Stormy with us too.

But now if we are in Covenant with God we may be peaceable and quiet within, for God, even our *own God*, will bleſs us: 'Tis God, even our *own God*, does correct us, and he will take off the Edge of the Affliction.

A wretched King once ſaid; Had he been by when God made the World, he would have taught him how to have mended it in many particulars: And ſince his days we have had ſome *learned Fools*, that pretend to go very Mathematically to work, and a great many Errors have they found in the divine Workmanſhip. They don't like the roughneſs of the ſurface of the Earth, the Hills and Mountains, the inequality of the Seaſons of the Year; they mightily diſlike the gaping Chanal of the Sea, the broken Cliffs and the naked Shore cut into many irregular Angles.

But now they that have been ſuch wiſe Philoſophers have been guilty of groſs Miſtakes and not God. For if the Earth had been as ſmooth as theſe Men would have had it, we ſhould then have wanted

the

the fruitful Valleys, the plentiful Springs, and a great many precious Metals. In ſhort, all manner of Navigation and Commerce had been utterly ruined to the prejudice of Mankind.

When we are under the Wheel, and preſſed with a weight of heavy Afflictions, how apt are we to cry out; Why ſo many broken and rough Steps in my way, why ſo many Breaches made in my Health, that create me ſo much trouble, and give ſo great an interruption to the Buſineſs of Life: But ſurely we are not altogether ſo Ignorant as we would make our ſelves. Look into thy Heart, Man, and thou wilt be quickly able to anſwer this Queſtion thy ſelf.

But I demand whether thou haſt an Intereſt in the Covenant of Grace, Yea or No? If not, thou haſt reaſon to turn the ſtream of thy Complaints into another Channel: I have heard of the Covenant of Grace, and the great Bleſſings of it; but my Soul is like to be miſerable for ever, or I am very doubtful whither I ſhall ever be the better for them or no. If it be thus with thee after all the Sabbaths and Sacraments thou haſt enjoyed, what reaſon haſt thou to weep over thy own Soul.

But if indeed thou art intereſted in the Covenant, and this is cleared up to thy

Soul, thou art a happy Man how many ſoever thy Miſeries are. If thou doſt bethink thy ſelf thou wilt ſay; As much Poverty and Affliction as I am in, yet would I not exchange my Condition with the greateſt Monarch on Earth. Tho' thou art ſunk down never ſo low, yet thou art highly favoured of the Lord, and ſhall have the Divine Preſence continually with thee; whoever fails, God hath ſaid, he will *never fail*: He hath ſaid, *My Grace is ſufficient for thee.* As perplexed as thy Affairs be, yet *all things ſhall work together for good.* As miry as the way is, yet chear up, there is a Heaven of Eternal Glory in full view. *Why then art thou caſt down, O my Soul, why art thou* thus ſinfully and fooliſhly *diſquieted within me?* The Storm will drive me the ſooner to the Harbour, I ſhall quickly enter upon my Eternal Reſt. And then, and not till then, ſhall we fully underſtand the Beauty, the Wiſdom and Order of the Covenant of Grace, and the Happineſs of thoſe that are interreſted in it. Glory, Honour and Praiſe be given to God and to the Lamb for ever. *Amen.*

SERM.

SERMON VIII.

2 Sam. 23. 5.

Altho' my houſe be not ſo with God, yet he hath made with me an everlaſting Covenant, order'd in all things and ſure: for this is all my ſalvation and all my deſire, altho' he make it not to grow.

THE Doctrine that lies before us from theſe Words is this.

Such is the Nature and Properties of the Covenant of Grace, that an Intereſt in it will give a Man Relief and Comfort under all Afflictions, whither Perſonal or Family ones.

I have treated of the Nature of the Covenant, and waving others, have fixed on this particular Property of it: That 'tis a Covenant well and wiſely *ordered* in all things, *i. e.* 'Tis ſo contrived in all the parts of it, that they have a natural tendency effectually to promote the great Ends of the Covenant, which are the Glory of God, the Honour of Chriſt, the

the Duty and Comfort, and Happineſs of Man.

I have proved that the Covenant of Grace is thus well Ordered.

1. As to the Mediator of it.

2. As to the Bleſſings promiſed in it.

I muſt now prove the ſame.

3. As to the Terms required by it.

Now this being a matter of ſome Difficulty and of very great Moment, I muſt,

I. I. State and prove it. And

II. II. Shew the good Order of the Covenant in ſettling this matter.

I. I. For the ſtating and proving the Point. Take it briefly in theſe following Particulars.

1. I do not now ſpeak of the firſt inherent ſaving Grace, the new Heart and the new Spirit; but only of the following Bleſſings of the Covenant, *viz.* Pardon and Juſtification here, and eternal Glory hereafter.

2. By the Terms of the Covenant, I mean not any thing performed by us in our own ſtrength; or that has any thing of Merit in it, or is a valuable Conſideration: But I mean ſomething required of us, which if by God's Grace it be wrought in us, and done by us, we ſhall be Pardoned, Juſtified and Saved for the ſake of

of Christ alone; but if it be not wrought in us, or done by us, we shall not partake of these Blessings of the Covenant.

3. There are some Terms or other.

There is indeed no express mention of them in that passage of the Apostle. But then we must consider, that not the Form and Tenour, but the Nature and Quality, Vertue and Effects of the Covenant are there described: But then 'tis implied, that there are some Terms, as there are other places where they are laid down, because 'tis a Covenant, and because 'tis the peculiar Advantage of those that are in this Covenant; that they shall not break it, and that he will give them Grace and Strength to fulfil it. Now there would be no danger of our breaking it, nor any need of Divine Grace to fulfil it, if there were no Terms to be either broken or kept. *Heb.*8.10.

4. Faith and Repentance are the Terms of Justification and Pardon, and a course of holy sincere Obedience is the Condition of our Glorification.

A Man that Believes shall be Justified; but till he do so the *Wrath of God abides upon him. If a Man forsake his evil ways and thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, he will have mercy and abundantly pardon. If we do not repent, we shall all likewise perish. If a Man be overtaken with a fault*

and

and then *confeſs* his Sin, *God is faithful and juſt to forgive his ſin*; and if we apply our ſelves to Chriſt our *Advocate*, the condemning Sentence ſhall not paſs upon us. *If we thro' the Spirit mortifie the deeds of the Body we ſhall live; but if we live after the Fleſh we ſhall die. He that endureth to the end ſhall be ſaved, but if any Man draw back his Soul ſhall have no pleaſure in him.*

I do not ſay, that theſe Terms are of the ſame nature; Repentance is only the diſpoſing Condition for Pardon, and Obedience for Salvation; without which the Perſons were not meet for ſo great Bleſſings: But Faith is the receiving Condition. It hath a peculiar relation to Chriſt and his Righteouſneſs, Death and Merits; 'tis a practical acknowledging of them, and truſting to them, by and thro' the doing of which we are juſtified.

5. Tho' I ſtate Faith to be a Condition of Juſtification, yet I don't ſay 'tis no more than ſo, nor that Faith and Repentance are in all reſpects of the ſame Uſe in our Juſtification.

Faith and Repentance are not in all reſpects of the ſame Uſe. Repentance is the leſs Principal, Faith the more noble Condition. Repentance only diſpoſeth the Perſon, and removes that which renders him unmeet for ſuch a Bleſſing; Faith

Faith is the receiving Condition, by which we are actually invested.

Faith hath that relation to Christ that no other Grace hath, and may, besides the Notion of a Condition, be called the *Instrumental Means* whereby we apprehend and receive the Righteousness and Merits of Christ, by and for which Righteousness and Merits of his, we are justified in the sight of God by vertue of his Word and Promise.

These things being premised, I come to shew,

II. That with respect to the Terms of Justification, or Pardon and Eternal Life. The Covenant is wisely and well ordered. This I shall endeavour to evince by the following Considerations. II.

1. These Terms are not derogatory from the free Grace of God or the Merits of Christ.

They are required of fallen Creatures, who, if they had had their due, had been destroyed for their Breach of the first Covenant, and if rich Grace had not interposed, had never had any new Terms propounded to them.

These are not such Terms but that even then we might be condemned by strict Justice, and they would not at all avail us, were it not for God's gracious acceptation and the Merits and Intercession of Christ

Christ. 'Tis by the free Grace of God procured for us by Christ, that we are enabled to perform them. And they are neither in whole nor in part that Price by which deliverance from Death or right to Pardon and eternal Life, is purchased. They are only the *Means* which God hath appointed to be used by us, that we may receive those Blessings and Benefits which Christ alone hath purchased for us. They are only Means whereby we obtain and preserve an Interest in Christ's imputed Righteousness, for the sake of which imputed Righteousness alone it is that we are justified and pardoned; have a Right given and continued to us to Eternal Glory, and at last have the actual possession of it.

So that tho' we are said *to buy*, 'tis in
Isa. 55. 1. a very improper Sense, for 'tis *without Money and without Price*; and all is given to us. We *take of the Water of Life* freely. So that the Crown of Glory is still kept on the Head of free Grace, and in all things Christ *hath the Preheminence*.

Sure I am, that the Scripture speaks of the necessity of Repentance, as very fairly consistent with the free Grace of God:
2 Chron. 30. 9. *For if you turn again unto the Lord, your Brethren and your Children shall find compassion before them that lead them Captive, so that thay shall come again into this Land.*

For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his Face from you, if you return to him.

And if Repentance had been inconsistent with the Merits of Christ. He would never have ordered his Apostles to have preached *Repentance and Remission of sins in his Name.* And the Apostle *Paul* tells us; *Therefore it is by Faith that it might be by Grace.* And Heaven is set forth as a *Reward*, and yet 'tis an *Inheritance* too, and *Eternal Life is the gift of God thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Luke 24: 47.

Rom. 4. 16.

And if this were not so, it would be a great Sin to *believe* that we may be justified; to *repent* that we may be pardoned; to *sow to the Spirit, that of the Spirit we may reap everlasting Life:* For 'tis a great Sin to do any thing that derogates from the free Grace of God, and the Merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. These are Terms by which Man is exceedingly humbled.

For what is Faith, but the flight of a convinced Sinner, who hath ruined and undone himself to the Mercy of God and the Merits of Christ, as the only way whereby he can be saved from the Wrath to come.

And as Faith is a self emptying and humbling Grace, so is Repentance too. For what is it to Repent, but to cast our selves

ſelves at the Foot of God; to lye in the Duſt before him; to abhor our ſelves, to confeſs our Madneſs; bewailing our Folly; condemning our ſelves as utterly unworthy his Favour, and deſerving his Wrath and Vengeance; humbly engaging to do ſo no more.

'Tis a very hard thing to bring a proud Spirit to do this with reference to his fellow Creature, whom he hath notoriouſly wronged. And now that all our Reſolutions are founded on Divine Grace, and all the Obedience we perform by ſtrength derived from Chriſt and the acceptance of it owing to his Death and Interceſſion, this is a further Mortification. Hereby God and Chriſt are greatly glorified, and Man is deeply abaſed.

3. Theſe Terms are as low as could rationally have been expected.

No doubt but it would have been Grace, and free Grace too, if God had promiſed to pardon and ſave every impenitent, notorious and diſobedient Wretch; but there is no ſuch Grace in God, nor is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe there ſhould be.

Suppoſing the Doctrine of our Redemption by the Death of Chriſt, who can imagine but that Faith in him muſt be required of us? This was ſo noble an Inſtance of his Obedience to the Father, and of his Love to God and the Souls of

Men, that for this Reaſon he could not but be exceeding precious in his ſight. *Therefore doth my Father love me, becauſe I lay down my Life for my ſheep. This Commandment have I received of my Father.* Now had it been conſiſtent with this to have beſtowed his Glorious Bleſſings upon thoſe that continue to ſlight and undervalue him as every Unbeliever doth.

Nor can we reaſonably imagine but that God ſhould inſiſt upon Repentance as neceſſary to Pardon, and Obedience to Eternal Salvation. To have done otherwiſe had been inconſiſtent with the Authority of God, would have deſtroyed the Credit of his Laws and weakned his Government. It would have encouraged Sin, and weakned and contradicted one of the great Ends of Chriſt's Death; which was to evidence the Purity and Holineſs of the Divine Nature, and his Irreconcilable hatred to Sin; to amend and reform the World, ſave Men from their Sins, and deſtroy the Works of the Devil in their Souls.

A little Brief Reflection by way of Application on what hath been ſaid, ſhall cloſe this Diſcourſe.

1. Examine your ſelves whither you are intereſted in the Bleſſings of the Covenant of Grace, by enquiring whither you have complied with the Terms thereof, Yea or No.

'Tis the height of Folly and Madneſs, to be unconcerned about a matter of ſo great Moment; or to take up with vain and groundleſs confidence.

If you ask me, How ſhall I know this? I Anſwer,

Obſerve the uſual Frame and Temper of your Spirits; and the ordinary Drift and Scope of your Lives, whether you walk and act like Penitent, Believing, Obedient Perſons, Yea or No.

Can you go from day to day, and no Humbling of your Souls before God for Old and New Sins; no Hatred of them, and Loathing your ſelves for them?

Are there no thoughts of Chriſt, no freſh acts of conſenting to him and relying upon him? do you think it enough to remember him upon the Monthly returns of a Sacrament, and forget and live as without him, all the ſpace between.

Is there any Sin you prevailingly regard and love in your heart, and are ever now and then knowingly and willfully guilty of?

Is there any Duty Perſonal or Relative, towards God, your ſelves or others, that you live in the frequent, willful, lazy, known neglect of?

How is it with you as to your darling Sin, ſuch as the bent of your Natures, your Conſtitution and Temper; or your

your Buſineſs and Employment do moſt of all incline you to? How ſtands it with you in reference to what the Scripture calls the *Plague of a Mans* own *Heart*, and his *own Iniquity?* Is this amended? and do you get ground of it? or doth it ever now and then break in upon you and prevail over you?

How is it with you as to that particular *Branch* of that Duty which you have been naturally moſt avers to? Are you ſtill Negligent, Careleſs, Lazy and Sloathful here, often omitting againſt the plain Rule of God's Word, the reiterated Dictates of Conſcience and of the Spirit of God?

If ſo, however Conſcience may be a Sleep, and you may have your Pleaſant Dreams, while you are in Health and Strength, and your Thoughts diverted with the Buſineſs and Pleaſures of Life; You will certainly be in very great ſtraights of Soul, when once you are throughly Awakened, and a Dying Hour comes.

2. Sincerely comply with theſe Terms of the Covenant if you have not yet done it.

If any ask; but what can we do in order hereunto.

I Anſwer,

Give your ſelves much to Conſideration and Prayer. S 2 Conſider

Consider the Blessings of the Covenant, Pardon of Sin, Acceptance with God and Eternal Life and Glory : Things of such Inestimable value, that you cannot but earnestly Covet, and think nothing too much that you may be possest of them.

And then consider the necessity of performing the Terms, that you may not miss of these Priviledges and Blessings ; otherwise then so, you cannot expect them and shall never have them.

And all this will make you thoughtful and serious, and earnestly Cry to God, that he would grant you Repentance unto Life, and work the work of Faith with power in you, and that through his strengthning of you, you may be enabled to do all things.

And don't defer this to an Old Age, a Sick Bed, or an uncertain hereafter. If these things are difficult now, they will be more so hereafter, when your hearts by length of Time and frequent Practice, are much hardened in Sin.

And what is your Life ? 'tis but a Vapour. How can you tell you shall have a long lingring Sickness of it, and not be cut off with a sudden stroke. Some Houses moulder away by little and little, and one stone is pluck'd away after another ; but some too fall flat on the ground in a Moment.

And

And how many Diſeaſes are you ſubject too, which may ſtupifie all the Powers of your Soul, and take away the uſe of your Reaſon in whole or in part. 'Tis a diſmal thing to have this work to do when your Heads are clouded, your Underſtandings ſcattered, your Memories broken, your Conſcience terrified, and the Thoughts of God and of Eternity overwhelm and diſtract you, and your thoughts ſo confuſed, that you cannot knit two of them together in an orderly manner.

And who can aſſure you of the Grace of God, if it be now neglected by you? You may as ſoon command the Winds to blow, as him to move as you liſt; and yet without him, you may as ſoon remove Mountains, as comply with the Terms of the Covenant. *Behold now is the accepted time, this is the day of Salvation. In this your day, know the things that belong to your Eternal Peace.*

3dly, and Laſtly. To thoſe that have complied with the Terms of the Covenant, and have an Intereſt in it. Be thankful. Be careful you don't break Covenant with God. Be comforted under all your Sorrows and Troubles of what nature and kind ſoever. Be contented, though your Lot and Portion in this World be never ſo mean.

A Brief DISCOURSE OF *Infant-Baptiſm*;

Delivered at the *Public Baptiſm* of an INFANT,

AT

Kingſton upon *Thames*;

June 23. 1700.

Beloved in our Lord,

BEing deſired to Baptize the Child of my Friend and your Paſtor; before I do ſo, I ſhall ſpeak ſomewhat, as briefly and as clearly as I can, for the juſtifying our Practice of *Infant Baptiſm*: Which I ſhall do in the four following Heads or Conſiderations.

Conſideration I.

No Man pretends, that 'tis written in *ſo many Words* in the Scripture, that the Infants of Believers are to be Baptiz'd.

All that we say in the Case is this, *viz.* We can prove by *just Consequence* from the Scriptures, that 'tis the Mind and Will of Christ, that their Infants should be Baptized. And this we think to be sufficient for these Two Reasons.

Reason 1. Because Christ himself thought this to be *sufficient*, for the Proof of a Matter of greater Moment than *Infant-Baptism*; viz. A Fundamental Article of Faith, the *Resurrection* of the just and unjust; which as you will find in *Mat.* 21. 31, 32. he doth not prove against the *Sadducees* who denied it, by producing any Text of Scripture, wherein it was written in *so many Words* or *Syllables*, that there shall be a *Resurrection*: He goes another way to work. He proves it
Exod. 3. 6. *by Consequence* from that Scripture, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* How many *Consequences* are necessary, to prove the Resurrection of all Men from these Words? *viz.* (1.) That the *Souls* of *Abraham*, and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, are yet in Being; because he does not say, I *was*, but I *am* their God. (2.) That this Expression of being *their God*, doth imply, his being engaged to manifest himself some time or other, to be their *Benefactor* in an Eminent Manner; that he will do something for them, far better than for any other Men. (3.) That he

he did not fully manifeſt himſelf to be ſo very great a Benefactor to them, while they were in this World. As to Temporal Bleſſings many others exceeded them; *Pharaoh* for Inſtance. All that he did for them, fell vaſtly ſhort of what that *Big* Expreſſion, *I am their* God, doth import. (4.) That therefore he will fill it up in another ſtate, which is yet to come. (5.) That in order thereunto, they ſhall riſe from the dead, that they may be compleatly happy in Body and Soul. For he is a God not of a *Piece* only, but of their *whole* Perſons; and therefore their Whole Man, Body as well as Soul, ſhall be made exceedingly happy. (6.) If *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* riſe again; ſo ſhall other Men, to whom alſo the Moſt High is peculiarly related as there God. (7.) If the Righteous riſe again, ſo ſhall the *Wicked*. And therefore there ſhall be a Reſurrection of the juſt and unjuſt.

All theſe Conſequences muſt be drawn, to make good our Saviour's Proof of a *Fundamental* Article of Faith. We don't need ſo long a *Train* of Conſequences to prove the Lawfulneſs and Duty of Baptizing our Infants (as you ſhall ſee by and by) though if we did, we have the Warrant of our Saviour's Example, who took this Method for Eſtabliſhing a Point of much greater Concern.

Reaſon

Reaſon 2. Our Adverſaries themſelves do the ſame, when they *Oppoſe* Infant-Baptiſm; as we do, when we contend for it. They don't pretend to bring any place of Scripture, wherein 'tis written in juſt ſo many *Words and Syllables*, that Infants are *not* to be Baptized: But they endeavour to prove it *by Conſequence*: Or elſe there could be no Arguing or Diſpute about the matter. If they argue from Conſequences *againſt* Infant-Baptiſm; we muſt not be blamed for doing the ſame *for* it. The *Method* and Way of Proceeding is the ſame on Their Side and Ours. This may ſuffice for the *Firſt Conſideration*. I proceed to

Conſideration II.

The turning Point of this Controverſie lies here, *viz.* Are our Infants within the Covenant, are they the viſible Members of Chriſt's Church or Kingdom; Yea, or No? And I beſeech you to take *ſpecial Notice* of this; whether we are not able to make good theſe Two Things.

1. That our Infants are within the Covenant, are viſible Members of Chriſt's Church or Kingdom. And,

2. That IF they are, then they have a Right to Baptiſm.

1. That

1. That our Infants are within the Covenant, and are the Viſible Members of Chriſt's Church or Kingdom. That the Infants of Believers were ſo of Old, is not denied. That thoſe were Privileges, cannot be queſtion'd. None has ever yet produced any Scripture to prove, that they are repealed. Yea, on the contrary, there are many Paſſages in the New Teſtament; whence it will appear, that theſe Ancient Priviledges are continued to Us and Ours.

To name a Few,

Luke 18. 15, 16. *They brought unto him* Infants, *that he would touch them: but when his Diſciples ſaw it, they rebuked them. But Jeſus called them unto him, and ſaid, ſuffer* Little Children *to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of ſuch is the Kingdom of God.* By the *Kingdom of God*, muſt be meant one of theſe two Things. Either,

(1.) The Goſpel-Church: In which Senſe, that Expreſſion is often to be taken. Or,

(2.) The Future State of Glory.

Now let any take which of theſe two he pleaſes; if the *Firſt*, viz. *The Goſpel-Church*; then we have what we are pleading for, Infants belong to the Goſpel-Church.

If

If the *Second*, viz. *The future State of Glory*; thence it will follow, that our Infants are within the Covenant, and belong to the Church and Kingdom of Chriſt here on Earth; for elſe they can't enter into Heaven. Had it been quite contrary to this; had it been written, that Chriſt was very *angry* with thoſe, who *brought* little Children to him; and had he ſaid, *Suffer them not to be brought unto me; for of ſuch the Kingdom of Heaven is not:* I ſuppoſe, the *Anti-pædo-baptiſts* would have made great Improvement of it.

If our Infants are ſaved, it muſt be by ſome Covenant: If by ſome Covenant, it muſt be by the Covenant of Grace. (For by the Covenant of Works, all Fleſh is condemned.) They can't be ſaved by the Covenant of Grace, if they are not within it; if it don't reach and extend to 'em.

If Infants dying in their Infancy are ſaved; they muſt belong to Chriſt's Church which is his Body. For he is the Head, and actually a Saviour to none, but thoſe who belong to him; who are his Members and Parts of his Body.

If they are not Members of Chriſt's Kingdom, then they are Members of the Devil's Kingdom. For the whole World is divided between theſe two. And can any

any who are the Members of the Devil's Kingdom, ſo living, and ſo dying, be ſaved?

Again, That our Infants are within the Covenant, and Viſible Members of Chriſt's Church and Kingdom; will appear from *Rom.* 11. 17. where the Apoſtle treating of the Rejection of the *Jews*, and the Calling of the *Gentiles*; has theſe remarkable Words: *If ſome of the Branches were broken off, (i. e.* That part of the *Jewiſh* Church who rejected Chriſt, were Unchurch'd) *And thou (*who waſt a *Gentile) being a Wild Olive, wert graffed in among them; (viz.* The believing *Jews*, who ſtill retained their Ancient ſtanding in the Church, and thou art added to 'em) *and with them, partakeſt of the Root and Fatneſs of the Olive-Tree.*

And then *ver.* 20. *Becauſe of Unbelief they were broken off*; who are called *ver.* 21. *The Natural Branches.* And *ver.* 24. 'tis ſaid of them, that upon their Converſion, they ſhall again *be graffed into their own Olive-Tree.* Now the great Enquiry here will be, what the Apoſtle means by the *Olive-Tree.*

They who oppoſe Infant-Baptiſm ſay, hereby is meant the *Inviſible Church.* Now the *Inviſible Church* is the Company of the Elect, that have been, are, or ſhall be ſanctified and finally ſaved.

On

On the contrary We ſay, by the *Olive-Tree* is meant the *Viſible Church*. Now the *Viſible Church* is a Company of People, who profeſs the True Religion; ſome whereof do it in Sincerity, but others of 'em are not ſincere in the Profeſſion of it.

And that by the *Olive-Tree* is meant, not the *Inviſible*, but the *Viſible Church* will appear: Becauſe,

The Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch an *Olive-Tree*, whereof the *Jews* were *Natural*
Ver. 21. Branches. Now no Man is by *Nature* (but by meer *Grace*) a Member of the *Inviſible* Church.

And the Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch an *Olive-Tree*, whence ſome of the Branches
Ver. 20. were *broken off*: Now no Man is broken
Rom. 11. 7. off from the *Inviſible* Church: The *Election of God ſhall obtain*; the *purpoſe*
Rom. 9. 11. *of God according to Election ſhall ſtand.* All ſuch ſhall be finally ſaved.

Again, The Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch an *Olive-Tree*, from which, the Generality of the *Jews* were broken off: Now no Man will ſay, that the Generality of the *Jewiſh* Nation in our Saviour's Days, were Members of the *Inviſible* Church; *i. e.* were real Saints or Regenerate Perſons.

Theſe Conſiderations ſhew, that by the *Olive-Tree* is meant the Viſible Church.

Now

Now do but Observe the Arguments drawn hence, for proving our Infants being within the Covenant, and Visible Members of the Church. *viz.*

First, The Apostle saith, only that *some* of the Branches, *i. e.* of the *Jews*, were broken off; and that it was for *Unbelief*. The Believing *Jews* therefore were not broken off, but retained their Ancient Standing in the Church. And so did their Infants. For if their Infants were broken off, it must be for *Unbelief*; which is the only cause assigned by the Apostle. If they were broken off for Unbelief, it must be for their own Unbelief; or, for that of their *Parents*. For their *own* Unbelief it could not be, because by reason of their tender Age, they were not capable of committing the Sin of Rejecting Jesus Christ. For their *Parents* Unbelief it could not be, because we speak only of the Children of such *Jews*, whose Parents did believe on Christ; when he was Preached to them. *Ver.* 17. *Ver.* 20.

Now if the Infants of the believing *Jews*, were continued Members of the Christian Church; our Infants are Members of it too. For there is no Difference under the Gospel, between *Jew* and *Gentile*.

Secondly,

Secondly, We Gentiles *are graffed in among* the Natural Branches, and *with them partake of the Root and Fatneſs of the Olive-Tree :* i. e. Believers under the New Teſtament, do as amply and fully partake of Covenant Bleſſings and Privileges, as Believers under the Old Teſtament did ; of which this was one very valuable One, that their Children were Members of the Viſible Church, were within the Covenant ; the Moſt High promiſed (and a great Promiſe it is) *I will be a God to thee, and to thy ſeed.*

Gen. 17. 7.

Thirdly, The *Jews* upon their Converſion, ſhall be *graffed in* again *into their own Olive-Tree.* How can that be, if their Church-ſtate then, ſhall be ſo very different from what it formerly was ; their Children being then to be left out, who were formerly taken in ?

In ſhort, the unbelieving *Jews* and their Children were broken off ; when the *Jews* ſhall be Converted, they and their Children ſhall be taken in again. Believing *Jews* and their Children kept their Ancient Standing ; and Believing *Gentiles* and their Children are taken in among them ; ſhare in the Privileges which the one are continued in, and which the other loſt ; *i. e.* They and

their Children are Church-Members, and within the Covenant.

Which is further proved from that known Paſſage, 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. *Elſe were your Children unclean, but now are they Holy.* Which can't be underſtood of a Holineſs by real *Regeneration*, or the Infuſion of Gracious Principles. Alas! Too many Children, that are deſcended from Pious Parents, give plain Evidence that they are not Born of God. Nor can it be meant of *Matrimonial Holineſs*, as the Oppoſers of Infant-Baptiſm ſpeak; and ſo they make this to be the Senſe of the Place; *viz. Elſe were your Children unclean*; *i. e.* ſay they, they were *Baſtards*: But now are they Holy; *i. e.* ſay they, are *Lawfully begotten.*

This Expoſition can't be right; for this would be to make the Apoſtle ſay, that if at leaſt One of the Parents be not a Chriſtian, then all the Children are Baſtards: which is not true. For Marriage is Honourable among *A L L*, Heathens as well as Chriſtians. And if the Parents are Married, whether they be Believers or no, their Children are Legitimate, and can't be ſaid to be *baſely* born. It muſt therefore be meant of a Fœderal or Covenant-Holineſs. *Heb.* 13. 14.

Theſe are ſome (and but a few) of the Arguments our Divines produce. But

then Obſerve what 'tis they are brought for; Not to prove *Immediately*, that Infants are to be *Baptized*. Theſe Arguments *Immediately* and *Directly* prove no more than this, that our Infants are *within the Covenant*; Holy by a *Covenant-Holineſs*, as the whole Nation of the *Jews* were; ſeparated to be the Viſible People of God, Subjects of his Kingdom, Members of his Houſe and Family. Now this being proved in the *Firſt Place*, Hence our Divines argue by juſt Conſequence in the

Second Place, That IF our Infants are thus within the Covenant, and are Viſible Members of Chriſt's Church and Kingdom; (which hath been proved) That,

Hence it follows, they have a Right to Baptiſm.

Circumciſion, while it was the Initiating Sign of the Covenant, was *for that Reaſon* applied to Infants. Now Baptiſm doth ſucceed in the room of Circumciſion, and ſhould be applied to our Infants, if they are within the Covenant (as it hath been proved they are.)

Col. 2. 11, 12.

Go and Teach, (or rather, as the Word by the conſent of all Parties doth ſignifie, and ſhould be Tranſlated) Go and *Diſciple* all Nations, Baptizing them, &c. *Mat.* 28. 19. If our Infants are *Diſciples*, they muſt thereupon be *Baptized*.

If

If they are Chriſt's Soldiers, they muſt by this Ordinance be liſted under him as their Captain. If they are his Subjects, they muſt be declared to be ſuch by Baptiſm, which is the External diſtinguiſhing Badge between his Subjects, and thoſe who are not ſo. *Acts* 2. 38, 39. *Be baptized every one of you*: For *the Promiſe is to you and to your Children.* The Parents are required to be Baptized for this Reaſon, *becauſe the Promiſe is to them*; but the Promiſe reaches to the *Children* too; and therefore *they* alſo are to be Baptized. And 'tis Obſervable, the Apoſtle don't ſay the Promiſe *WAS*, but the Promiſe *IS* to you and to your Children. So much for that *Second Conſideration* that the *Turning-Point* of this Controverſie lies here, *viz.* Are our Infants within the Covenant, are they the Viſible Members of Chriſt's Church or Kingdom; Yea, or No?

Be ſure you mind and conſider this.

Conſideration III.

Diſtinguiſh between a Nation that never had the Goſpel Preached to 'em, having always been Heathens; and a Nation to whom the Goſpel hath for many Ages been Preached, the Inhabitants having for ſeveral Generations been profeſſed Chriſtians.

Between a People who have never yet owned Chriſt; and a People that have owned him. In the former caſe (which was the caſe of thoſe to whom the Apoſtles firſt Preached) *We* would exhort Perſons to Repent and Believe, and upon their Profeſſion of both theſe, we would Baptize them. But then we would alſo Baptize their Infants. Requiring this Profeſſion of the Parents before Baptiſm, doth not prove that *WE* would not Baptize their Infants. Therefore neither did the Apoſtles requiring this Profeſſion, prove *They* were againſt Infant-Baptiſm. They Preach'd to the *Jews*, who had not yet owned Chriſt; and to *Heathens*, who had not heard of him before; and to Perſons grown up; and therefore we read of Believing put before Baptizing. But Chriſt hath been known, owned and profeſſed in *England* for many Ages. Our Parents before we had a Being were Diſciples, and We were *Born Diſciples by the Covenant*, and ſo had a Right to the Seal of that Covenant which is Holy Baptiſm; *without any fore-going Teaching*. The Time *When*, the Manner *How*, we come to be Diſciples, is not material: Whether by the Fore-going Teaching of a Miniſter, or by God's ſpecial and peculiar Vouchſafement. *Ananias* finding *Paul* a *Diſciple*, he Baptized him, tho' no Man had by *Teaching* made him ſo. In

In *Lev.* 25. 41, 42. God calls Children his *Servants*. If Children are God's *Servants*, though for the preſent, they can't do any *Work*; why may they not be *Diſciples*, though for the preſent they can't learn any *Leſſon*?

Now this Work of *Diſcipling* the Infants of Profeſſed Chriſtians being done to our Hands, we treat them as Diſciples, and lay a further Engagement on them to be ſuch; firſt by *Baptizing* them; and afterwards as they grow up, and are capable of it, by *Teaching* them: And ſo we keep cloſer to the Commiſſion in *Mat.* 28. 19. than they who oppoſe Infant-Baptiſm; for we obſerve the very *Order* of the Words, which they do not.

Conſideration IV.

The other Objections againſt *Infant-Baptiſm* have no Weight with them, becauſe of one of theſe Two Faults in 'em. Either,

(1.) They would have held as well againſt *Infant-Circumciſion*.

Or elſe,

(2.) They will as well hold againſt *Infant's-Salvation*.

(1.) They would have held as well againſt *Infant-Circumciſion*. Such as theſe, Why do you Baptize Infants, *They don't know what's done to them?*

To which 'tis replied, our Infants when they are Baptized, are not more ignorant what's done to them than the Infants of the *Jews* were, when they were Circumciſed.

Again, ſay they, Baptiſm is the Sign and Seal of the Covenant; why do you Baptize *Infants who can't underſtand the Covenant, much leſs conſent to it?*

To which 'tis replied, Circumciſion was
Rom. 4. 11. the Sign and Seal of the Covenant alſo; and the *Jewiſh* Children could no more underſtand or conſent to the Covenant than Ours; and yet they were Circumciſed; and our Children may be Baptized for any thing in this Objection.

Not to add, that the Conſent of the Parent goes for that of the Infant. How often do Men in their Leaſes and Covenants, bind their Children, who neither do know, nor are capable at that time of knowing any thing of the Matter? In *Deut.* 29. 10, 11, 12. Their *Little* Ones are entred into Covenant with God.

Again, ſay they, the End of Baptiſm is, that Goſpel-Duties, Privileges and Myſteries, might be repreſented by that Figure

Figure to the Eye, *viz.* Dying to Sin, and rising to Newness of Obedience; 'tis a Sign of Repentance, and Regeneration, and Faith. Why then do you Baptize *Infants, who can't understand the meaning of that Sign, or what is represented by Baptizing? and give no Proofs of their Repentance, or Regeneration, or Faith?*

To this 'tis replied, that Circumcision represented Regeneration, Mortification and Purity of Heart (whence Sanctification is set forth by Circumcising the Heart) And the *Jewish* Infants did no more understand, what was signified and represented by Circumcision, than our Infants do what is represented by Baptism; and gave no more Proofs of Mortification and Regeneration than our Infants do; yet the *Jews* Infants were on other Accounts Circumcised, and so may ours be Baptized for all that.

Though Baptism be not actually a *Teaching* Sign for the present to our Infants, no more than Circumcision was to the Infants of the *Jews*; yet Baptism is at present a *Distinguishing* Sign, and an *Engaging* One; whereby they are distinguish'd from the Children of Heathens, and obliged to the Duties of the Covenant; and may be of great Use to them, when they come to Years of Understanding. As Circumcision was a Distinguish-

ing and Engaging Sign to the Infants of the *Jews*; and of great Service to them when they were grown up.

(2.) Other Objections againſt Infant-Baptiſm, if they have not this Fault, that they would as well hold againſt Infant-Circumciſion, they have another as bad and worſe; *viz.* They would as well hold againſt *Infants Salvation.* Take for Inſtance that Objection, about which ſo great a Noiſe is made; *viz.* 'Tis written, *He that believeth and is baptized*, Mark 16. 16. Now ſay they, *Infants can't believe*; therefore they ought not to be *Baptized.*

To this 'tis replied, read the Verſe out, *He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* Now if there be any thing in their Arguing, Infants can't believe, and therefore they ſhould not be Baptized; it would as well follow, Infants can't *Believe, and therefore they ſhall not be ſaved.*

A

SERMON

Preached before the

RIGHT HONOURABLE

Sir *JOHN SHORTER* Knt.

Lord-Mayor

OF THE

CITY of *LONDON*;

AT

GROCERS-HALL,

February the 12th, 168$\frac{7}{8}$.

By *Nathanael Taylor.*

Publiſhed by his Lordſhips Command.

LONDON,

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To the Right Honourable

Sir *JOHN SHORTER* Knt.

Lord-Mayor

OF THE

CITY of *LONDON.*

MY LORD,

HAD *I been at liberty to have followed my own Inclinations, the ensuing Discourse had been thrown by, and lain neglected in my own Study only. But having received your Commands for the Publishing as well as the Preaching of it, I here present it to your Lordship; being resolved there shall be no defects in my Obedience, how many soever there may be in my Sermon. But it's not the design of this Dedication to make Apologies, or which is another common place usually insisted on, write a Panegyric. They are generally Hypocrites that blow Trumpets before other Men, as well as they that of old did it before themselves. If y^u take care that* your Works shall praise you, *and your own Conscience approve and commend*

commend you ; this will afford you a ſolid Satisfaction, when the good Words of Men only will no more comfort, than the Breath wherewith they utter them, will nouriſh you. And that your Lordſhip and your Honourable Brethren, may manage your Selves and all your Affairs in that Station wherein Providence hath ſet you, ſo as to ſecure this to your ſelves ; prevent the Reproaches of Conſcience, and live down thoſe of malicious Men ; that this great City and Religion may flouriſh under your prudent and juſt Adminiſtration, is and ſhall be the Daily Prayer of

MY LORD,

Your moſt Obedient

and Faithful Servant,

Nathanael Taylor.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

Lord-Mayor, *&c.*

LUKE X. 21.

In that Hour Jesus rejoyced in Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes; even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

HE that shall seriously consider the many express Prophecies concerning the *Messiah*; the great and incredible Diligence wherewith every Iota and Tittle of them was preserved; and the general Expectation among all sorts of Men in *Judæa* of his Coming and Kingdom, about our Saviour's Time; would be

be apt to think, that our Lord would have been as joyfully welcomed and entertained by them, as the firſt Approaches of the Sun are by thoſe that have been Buried in Darkneſs for many Months together in the remoter parts of the Earth: And that as he was uſher'd into the World with the *Hallelujahs* of Angels, ſo he would have been received with the *Hoſannas* of the Wiſeſt of Men. But he that is in the leaſt acquainted with the Hiſtory of our Saviour, as recorded by all the Four Evangeliſts, will eaſily ſee, that tho' he *came to his Own, yet his Own received him not*; and that though when he went out of the World, the Dead indeed aroſe, as if they would preſent him with their Sepulchres; yet as for the Living, while he was in the World, they would not afford him a Place wherein to lay his Head. He had indeed approved himſelf to be a Teacher ſent from God; for never did any Man ſpeak the Words, or do the Things which he had done: and yet the Generality reject him, and eſpecially the Sons of Wiſdom and of Learning did moſt furiouſly oppoſe him. He opened the Eyes of the Blind, yet the Phariſees would not ſee the truth of his Doctrine. He cured the Dumb, but this was his Reward from the Scribes, he himſelf was ſpoken againſt. He unſtop-

John 1. 11.

ped the Ears of the Deaf, but yet the Rulers would not hear him: He removed the Diſeaſes of their Bodies, with greater eaſe than the Errors and Prejudices of their Minds. The *Spiritual Wickedneſſes in* thoſe *high places*, were the only Evil Ones that would not be ſubject to him. Nay, as if thoſe raging Devils which he had caſt out of others, had entred into them, they Blaſpheme and Revile him; and their Doctors ſate in the Chair of Scorners as well as in the Seat of *Moſes*. Whilſt they that followed him were few in number, mean and ignorant, deſpicable as well for their underſtanding, as for their quality. Both of which things were very popular prejudices, and mightily improved againſt him to diſcourage Men from owning and ſubmitting to him. But yet our Bleſſed Lord was ſo far from being dejected and troubled in mind at this, that on the contrary, as the Evangeliſt tells us in the words I have now read, *In that hour Jeſus rejoiced in ſpirit, &c.* wherein we have theſe five things. *Ephes.* 6. 12.

1. The inward motion of Chriſt's Soul, and the external effect or expreſſion of it, *He rejoiced in ſpirit*; and ſuch a paſſion muſt have ſome vent, makes him break ſilence, and with an audible voice *give thanks*.

2. The

2. The time when this happen'd, *In that hour*; which calls us to cast our Eye back on the foregoing Verses. And therein we find our Saviour sending forth his Seventy Disciples to Preach the Gospel, and giving them directions how to behave themselves towards those that received their Message, and those that rejected it. Then he upbraids and threatens the Cities of *Corazin*, *Bethsaida*, and *Capernaum* for their impenitence under all those means of Grace which they enjoyed. And immediately upon this St. *Matthew* brings in our Saviour uttering the same words with those in my Text. But St. *Luke*, that gives us an account of our Saviour's using these expressions at a different time from what St. *Matthew* speaks of, inserts an account of the return of the Seventy Disciples, and their being puft up with the success of their Ministry, because, not only Diseases, but *Devils* themselves *were subject to them.*

Ver. 1. *From ver.* 3, *to* 11. *From ver.* 12, *to* 16. *Mat.* 11. 25, 26. *Ver.* 17. *Ver.* 17.

Our Saviour hereupon corrects that carnal joy, and turns this wandring stream into its right Channel, and directs them to rejoice in that which was a solid reason and foundation of joy, *viz.* because *their Names were written in Heaven.* And then he instructs them by his example, as he had done by his words; for seriously reflecting upon that scorn and contempt where-

Ver. 20.

wherewith the Scribes and learned Phariſees rejected his Doctrine, and the meanneſs of them that embraced it; *in that hour he rejoyced in ſpirit*, for that revelation of Divine Myſteries that God had made unto them, which he denied unto others.

3. The ſubject matter or reaſon of Chriſt's joy and thankſgiving, *Thou haſt hid theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, and revealed them to babes.*

Theſe things] *i. e.* the knowledge of thy ſelf and me, (which he mentions in the next Verſe) and thoſe Myſteries of thy Kingdom which I have declared, and on which Eternal Salvation doth depend. *Ver.* 22.

Thou haſt [*hid*] from ſome, [*revealed*] to others. By conſidering the latter of theſe words we ſhall the better underſtand the former of them. *Thou haſt revealed them*] He doth not ſpeak of an External Revelation; for that was not the peculiar privilege of ſome few only, Chriſt having Preached them publickly and plainly in the Ears of all the People; but of an Internal Revelation, enabling them in a Spiritual and Practical manner to apprehend thoſe Divine Truths that were outwardly propoſed to them. And conſequently by the *hiding* theſe things from others, we muſt underſtand the denying them that ſpecial Grace which

might open their minds to see the glory of Divine Mysteries, and their hearts to feel the transforming power of them; leaving them to their own obstinate wilful ignorance, to the lusts of their own hearts, and the power of Satan to blind and harden them.

Thou hast hid these things *from the Wise and Prudent.*] Men of great Parts, worldly Wisdom, humane Learning, such as the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* were. And revealed them to *Babes.* The word properly signifies those that are young in years; but being opposed to the Wise and Prudent, must be understood of those that are, as young Children use to be, weak in understanding; as Christ's Disciples were.

4. The notion under which Christ directs his thanksgiving to his Father for this thing; that of *Lord of Heaven and Earth*; which is a title very suitable to the matter insisted on, and denotes his absolute Dominion, and his infinite Power. *q. d.* It was not for want of ability, or of right, that thou hast not done otherwise. Thou didst act like one who hadst all power in thy hand, in thus revealing these thy Mysteries unto Babes; and by the same Almighty Power, couldst have shined into the hearts of the Wise and Prudent, who are thy Creatures also. But thou

thou art at liberty to chuſe or paſs by according as ſeems good in thy own Eyes.

5. Chriſt's approbation of, and acquieſcence in this diſpenſation, on this account, becauſe it was the gracious pleaſure of God. *Even ſo Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in thy ſight.*

From the words thus open'd, many Doctrines might be raiſed; but I ſhall take notice of one only.

Doct. *The ſaving Revelation of Divine things is uſually beſtowed on mean and inferior perſons, and denied to the wiſe and prudent that enjoy the ſame outward means with them.*

In the handling this Doctrine, I ſhall

I. Explain and confirm this Truth. I.
II. Shew upon what account this was matter of Joy and Thankſgiving unto Chriſt. II.
III. Apply all. III.

I. I ſhall explain and confirm this Truth. And here I.

1. *As to a notional Knowledge, Divine things are ſo far from being hid from the Wiſe and Prudent, that they are more fully underſtood by them than any of theſe weaker*

ones. Daily experience ſhews us, there are many of *the Diſputers of this World* that have a more exact ſcheme of Divine Truths in their heads, than thouſands of holy Souls. They have ſuch an underſtanding of Divine Matters, as they have of Humane Arts and Sciences : Can talk acurately and learnedly about them to the reviving the hearts of ſome, and ſtopping the mouths of others. Indeed the great things of God and Chriſt, the Precepts, Promiſes, and Threatnings of the Word, have not that ſound in their ears, nor that holy influence on their hearts and lives as they have on many inferior perſons. They do not ſee them with life and affection, they do not taſte the ſweetneſs, nor feel the power of them ; they have not the reliſh and ſavour of them on their ſpirits. They do not receive them with reſpect and veneration ; with that love, delight and holy obedience, as thoſe of weaker capacities do. All the knowledge that is in them, is but like thoſe Lamps that have been diſcovered in ſome Tombs ; ſtill there are dead bones, ſtench and rottenneſs within, and there the Carcaſe lies dead and unactive in the very ſame place and poſture, notwithſtanding all that light that ſurrounds it.

2. *Wiſdom*

2. *Wisdom and Prudence do not in themselves obstruct the saving Revelation of Divine Things, nor doth the want of them qualifie any for the receiving it.* Humane Wisdom and Learning are the Gifts of God, and the proper ornaments of our rational Faculties; like a Crown of Flame to a burning Taper. And therefore so far are such excellent qualifications from hindring any in their own nature from an hearty embracing Christianity, that if we consider how plainly the Doctrines of the Gospel are revealed; how undeniably they are proved to be from Heaven; how excellently suited to the distressed state of an Apostate World; with what exquisite Wisdom the whole is contriv'd to the Admiration of all the Glorious Angels; how reasonable its commands are, how glorious its promises, how terrible its threatnings; 'tis a very amazing thing that Men of Parts and Abilities to weigh and consider things, and discern their own Interest, should not readily entertain them. These noble things are not Obstructions to it *in themselves*; but those Lusts, and that Pride that too generally accompany them, like rust cleaving unto Silver and Gold.

Nor doth the want of these qualifie any Man for saving Knowledge. Nay, on the contrary, it renders Men naturally

more unapt and uncapable, as well as more unworthy of it. As the Woman of *Samaria* ſaid to our Saviour, *the Well is deep*; and the ſhorter the line is, ſo much the more unlikely it is in it ſelf to reach to the bottom for the drawing up of living Waters. If any have the advantage, it ſhould be Men of quick parts: for ſuch generally take a thing preſently, as ſpirits immediately catch fire; whereas things do not enter ſo eaſily, nor pierce ſo deeply into thoſe that are naturally dull and ſlow of underſtanding. If *the Iron be blunt*, much pains muſt be taken in *whetting* the edge, or more *ſtrength put forth* in the uſing it.

John 4. 11.

Eccl. 10. 10.

3. *The ſaving knowledge of Divine things is not denied to all that are wiſe and prudent, nor given to all inferior Perſons.* Some renowned for Wiſdom and Learning, have been of Chriſt's Retinue. Some curiouſly carved Pieces have been in our Father's Houſe that have exceedingly grac'd and adorn'd it. Sacred Records inform us of *Joſeph* of *Arimathæa*, a *rich* Man, and an *honourable* Councellour; of *Nicodemus* a *Maſter in Iſrael*; of *Sergius Paulus* a *prudent man*; of a profoundly Learned *Paul*; an Eloquent *Apollos*; and in the ſucceeding Ages there have been ſome others of a great name, that have *known the truth as it is in Jeſus*. Some that have

Acts 13. 7.

So the moſt Excellent Theophylus. begins & a Man of rank vid. Lightf. Harm. Vol 1. p. 392.

Eph. 4. 21.

have had the advantage of the higher ground, have breath'd in a clear Air, and been refresh'd with the beams of the Sun; while more inconsiderable Persons, like them that dwell in low and marish Grounds, have been wrapt up in Fogs and thick Darkness. The very dust of the Earth, being raised by the Prince of the Air, flew in Christ's face; the common People, I mean among the *Jews*, who cried out Crucifie him, which they would no more have done than their *Rulers*, had they *known the Lord of Glory.* 1 Cor. 2. 8.

4. *The saving knowledge of Divine things is most usually given to inferior persons; and most commonly denied to those that are wise and prudent.* The Temple at *Jerusalem* was made of the richest and most costly Materials; the Spiritual Temple generally of the meanest, only here and there a few precious and polished Stones that set off the whole Building. And the truth of this will appear, if you consider,

1. *How matters stood about the time of our Saviour's appearing, and while he continued in the World.*

Learning and Policy were then at the highest. But yet the wise Philosophers were lost in the Fog; and *by Wisdom the world knew not God.* Like the blinded *Sodomites*, they were groping after the 1 Cor. 21.

door of Knowledge and Eternal Life, when the Day-ſtar was juſt riſing, but were not able to find it. If we leave them, and paſs into the dwellings of the Children of *Iſrael*, who were now the *Goſhen* of the World, as they had been once of *Egypt*, we ſhall find them encompaſt with palpable darkneſs. The moſt underſtanding Men want an Eye to ſee. One would have thought, that as the light of the Morning ſtrikes firſt on the tops of the High Mountains, ſo the *dawning* of the day of Chriſt ſhould have been firſt perceived by the High Prieſts. That the Sanhedrin ſhould have had the moſt early notice of the riſing of the Sun of Righteouſneſs, as they uſed to have of the *Phaſis* of the New Moon. But on the contrary, the firſt tidings of an approaching *Meſſiah* were given to *Zechariah*, an ordinary Prieſt of the courſe of *Abias*; to *Elizabeth* his Wife, to the Babe in her Womb, to *Joſeph* the Carpenter, and *Mary* a deſpiſed Virgin, of a Royal Family, but run to decay, and ſunk like a dry Root under ground. True indeed, *three Wiſe Men* of the *Eaſt* were inform'd of Chriſt's Nativity by a *new Star*; but a more conſiderable number of *poor Shepherds* had it from a higher hand; one of the noble Order of Angels, thoſe *Morning Stars* was their Preacher. And one Meſſenger

Mat. 2. 1, 2.

Luke 2. 8.

did

did not suffice; there was besides *a great multitude of the Heavenly Host*, who in their hearing Sung a Psalm of Praise at the close of the Angelical Sermon. *Ver.* 13. The Wise Men understood the matter but darkly and confusedly, somewhat in the general, which left them under much perplexity and uncertainty, and caused them to resort to *Jerusalem* to make a farther enquiry. But the poor Shepherds are told all very plainly, both as to the Nature and Office of Christ; that he was a *Saviour* and the *Lord*: And as to the particular circumstances of Time and Place, *this day*, and in *the City of David*. *Ver.* 11. It was several days to be sure; nay, whatever *Baronius* saith to the contrary, for the credit of the *Roman* Calender, a Learned Man on good ground thinks, *above a year* before the Wise Men could obtain a sight of Christ. But the Shepherds find him the very *next morning*, and don't wait so long for admission into his Royal Presence, as the others did. *Ver.* 16. Lightf. *Works*, *Vol.* 1. *p.* 432.

When our Saviour was brought into the Temple, the Learned *Scribes* and *Pharisees* knew him no more than Subjects do their Prince when under a disguise. Only two aged persons, *Simeon* (who in all probability was not the famous Man of that name, the Son of *Hillel* and Father of *Gamaliel*, President of the *Ver.* 25.

great

great Sanhedrin, as ſome imagine) and
Ver. 35. *Anna* the Propheteſs of the Tribe of *Aſher*, that was always mean, and much more ſo ſince the Captivity; Perſons remarkable for nothing ſo much as their extraordinary Piety, by which the Holy Ghoſt deſcribes them, diſcern who he is; the one opening his Arms to receive him, and both of them their Mouths to praiſe God for him. Afterwards Chriſt was removed from *Bethlehem*, as tho' that were a place too near the great Doctors in *Jeruſalem*, and *Nazareth* an obſcure corner of the Country was the place of his uſual reſidence. *Lazarus*, *Martha*, *Mary*, Perſons of no extraordinary Quality, were his intimate Friends. Not Princes or Rabbies, but a Publican and Fiſher-men were choſen his Diſciples. The Learned Men indeed were ſometimes his Hearers; but they revile, oppoſe, undervalue, endeavour to enſnare and murther him,
Mat. 11. 5. while the *Poor* only receive the Goſpel. He bleſſes little Children, and they are the Perſons that ſing Hoſanna's to him.
John 4. He inſtructs a poor Woman of *Samaria* in the Myſteries of Salvation in a long and excellent Diſcourſe, tho' ſhe ſeemed
Luke 23. 8. to deny him a draught of Water. But as for King *Herod*, who had long deſired to ſee him, and if gratified, might have preſerved his Life, he could not get a word from

from Chriſt, tho' he hoped for a Miracle. There was not a greater Darkneſs on the face of the Earth, in the time of Chriſt's Paſſion, than there was upon the Underſtandings of *Pilate*, the Chief Prieſts and Elders. Chriſt communicates a ſaving-light and knowledge of himſelf to a poor condemned Thief that hung by him on the Croſs, and opens his Eyes that were ready to be cloſed by Death, while thoſe of the Rulers that were almoſt as near him, were *holden that they could not know him.*

2. *Things ran in the ſame Channel in the Apoſtles Days, and the ſucceeding Age.* At *Athens*, the Eye of the World, when *Paul* Preached Jeſus and the Reſurrection, he was reviled as a Babbler, diſputed againſt by two Sects of Philoſophers; dragg'd before the great Judicatory at *Mars's Hill*: And tho' the Judges there were remarkable for their * number and quality, being the moſt Famous Men in all *Greece* for Wiſdom and Morality, yet

Acts 17.

* For tho their number was not certain.

yet it could not be ſmall, becauſe nine of their *Archontes* that had Ruled well for one year, were annually choſen into that Society. It muſt therefore be a great miſtake of thoſe that ſay they were no more than 9, or 31, or 51. *Diogenes Laertius*, tell us that there were 281 of them that condemned *Socrates*, beſides thoſe that acquitted him; who, as *Plato* in his Apology affirms, were as many, wanting three only. And *Diogenes Laertius* informs us, that no leſs than 80 of thoſe that gave ſentence in favour of him, afterwards changed their minds; ſo that at leaſt, there were no leſs than 361, that Voted againſt him. Vide *Meurſi Areopag.* p. 32.

we

Acts 16. 14. we find but one of them, *viz. Dionyſius* Converted to the Chriſtian Faith. The heart of *Lydia* that *ſold purple*, was open'd, while *Felix*'s that wore it was only terrified. And though both he, and King *Agrippa* and *Bernice*, and *Feſtus* heard *Paul* reaſoning about Righteouſneſs, and Temperance, and Judgment to come, yet he that went fartheſt among them was but *almoſt perſwaded to be a Chriſtian.* And what the ſucceſs of his Labours generally was, he himſelf tells us; *not many wiſe men after the fleſh were called.*

Acts 26. 28.

1 *Cor.* 1. 26.

3. *The great things of the Goſpel, and the ſacred Records of Chriſtianity, are not ſuited to the Genius of theſe wiſe and prudent ones, nor penn'd ſo as to gratifie their vanity.* So far are the Apoſtles, like ſome Modern Miſſionaries in the remoter parts of the World, from drawing a Veil upon thoſe Articles of the Chriſtian Doctrine that ſeem moſt naked, and where it lies moſt open and expoſed to ſhame and reproach, that that part of it, a Crucified Saviour, they mainly inſiſt on in their Sermons and Writings, and magnifie as the higheſt inſtance of Divine Wiſdom, Power, Holineſs, Juſtice and Goodneſs, and require all Men heartily to own it as ſuch. They *openly triumph in the Croſs* of Chriſt, as he did upon it; a thing which the Wiſe Men of this World have ſcorned

Coloſſ 2. 15.

ſcorned in all Ages as the greateſt weakneſs and folly. The Truths, as well as the Laws of Chriſtianity tend to promote Holineſs, and are not accommodated to the evil inclinations of Mankind, as a Garment ſhaped ſo as to humour the body of a crooked Perſon. The Sacred Pen-Men are peculiarly ſevere againſt thoſe Sins that Men are moſt in love withal. They blow on all humane Wiſdom and Learning, that they may blaſt the Glory of it; and the whole of our Religion is ſo contrived, as to ſuffer Men *to glory in nothing but this, that they know the Lord.* Jer. 9. 24. Had the Holy Scriptures been Penn'd in an exact Method according to the Rules of Humane Art; had they been Adorned with all the Beauties of Style and Expreſſion; had they tranſmitted to us the ſecret intrigues of Princes, the Politick Maxims of States, or a more accurate Hiſtory of the flouriſhing Empires of the World, than all the Prophane Authors have done: Had *Paul*, when he came down from the Third Heavens, diſcourſed of the Hierarchy of Angels, and their ſeveral Orders; had his Language been as high as his rapture, theſe Men would have read and ſtudied him with a mighty reliſh. But here's not *Cicero*'s Rhetorick for an *Auſtin*, nor ſublime Metaphyſical ſubtilties for a profound *Bradwardine*.

The

The Mantles which these *Elijahs* dropt and left behind them when they went to Heaven, are not so finely Wrought, nor so curiously Embroider'd as they would have had them, nor of such a fashion as pleases them. The main scope of them is nakedly to relate matters of fact concerning an obscure Person, one Jesus, who was dead, but they affirm to be alive; propose many surprizing and stupendous Mysteries, and lay down very strict and severe Rules that concern all alike. They don't run out into high useless speculations, nor stand on Mathematical Certainty, but press all on the naked authority of God, which these Men think below them to bow and submit themselves unto. And all this in such a manner, that tho' 'tis plain enough to Men that are Vertuous and Humble, that they are from God; yet not so plain as to hinder Vain, Proud, Atheistical and Captious Men from starting many Objections against them, and stumbling at them. And therefore all Ages have had but too much reason to complain as they did of Old, that Unlearned Men rise up and take Heaven by Violence, while great Scholars sink down into Hell, live in Spiritual Darkness, and pass into that which is Eternal.

 II. Well,

II. Well, but tho' this be true as to matter of Fact, is not this a mighty Reproach and Scandal to Chriſt and Religion ? Had it not been more for his Honour and Intereſt to have had the *wiſe and prudent* ones on his ſide ? Or however, ſeeing it hath pleaſed God to take a contrary courſe,had it not been enough patiently to have born this, to have conſidered it with Calmneſs and Submiſſion ? Would it not have been more ſuitable to his tenderneſs, and mighty concern for the welfare of Mankind, to have turn'd his Eyes towards theſe Men with all the expreſſions of ſorrow, rather than to have lifted them up towards Heaven with all the ſigns of delight ? What reaſon is here for joy and thankſgiving, conſidering either the thing it ſelf, hiding from Men the things that belong to their eternal peace ; or the *perſon* ſpoken of ? What ! the Bleſſed *Jeſus*, the great Lover and Saviour of Men ! One would have thought he ſhould rather have lifted up his voice, and have wept upon this occaſion, and as he did on the death of *Lazarus*, have groaned rather than rejoiced in ſpirit.

And here Saint *Chryſoſtom*'s anſwer will not help us out, *viz.* that this Joy and Thankſgiving of Chriſt doth not refer to the *former*, the *hiding theſe things from the*

the wiſe and prudent; but to the *latter* Clauſe only, the *revealing of them unto babes*. And ſo he parallels it with that
Rom. 6. 17. place of the Apoſtle, *God be thanked that ye were the ſervants of ſin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of Doctrine which was deliver'd to you.* Where St. *Paul* can't be ſuppoſed to thank God but for the latter only; *q. d.* Though you were once the ſlaves of ſin, yet now I praiſe my God that you are become the Lord's Freemen.

But there is a mighty difference between theſe two Scriptures. For the Apoſtle doth not in that place aſcribe their being the Servants of Sin unto God as the *Author* of it, as our Saviour in my Text doth the hiding of theſe things from the Wiſe
Mat. 29. 14. and prudent, *Thou haſt hid them.* *Moral* evils come not from God, but *penal* and *judicial* ones of this nature are frequently aſcribed to him as his *marvellous* acts. That tremendous Prophetical threatning
Iſa. 6. 10. of his *making the heart of a rebellious people fat, and ſhutting their eyes leſt they ſhould ſee*, &c. is repeated no leſs than ſix times in the New Teſtament. God as a Soveraign and a Righteous Judge denies or withdraws his Grace when a People have a long time ſinned againſt the light with a high hand, leaves them to themſelves, and delivers them up to the will of Satan,

 who

who blind their Eyes, and hardens their Hearts.

The true anſwer therefore is this, That tho' the blinding of any Men conſider'd *nakedly in it ſelf*, and as they are rational Creatures made after the Image of God, and capable of Eternal happineſs, is matter of great ſorrow; yet Chriſt being a true Man, and filled with quick and lively affections to God and his Glory, doth rejoice and give thanks for the hiding theſe things from the Wiſe and Prudent, as well as for revealing them to Men of weaker capacities, as ſuch a diſpenſation in both the Branches of it tends to the diſplaying and glorifying the Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Juſtice, Power and Soveraignty of his Father: For all theſe are Magnified herein. And,

1. Chriſt rejoices and gives thanks becauſe ſuch a diſpenſation *makes exceedingly for the honour of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs*: See this in Four things.

(1.) *This tends to deſtroy pride, and advance the honour of his free Grace in the eyes of all whom he teaches and ſaves.* And 'tis highly reaſonable that this ſhould be done, conſidering the firſt riſe of our miſery, as well as the greatneſs of it. *You ſhall be like God's*, was the prevailing temptation that ruin'd Man. It was requiſite that he who had totally undone

himſelf by aſpiring, and bold attempts to exalt himſelf, ſhould be greatly debaſed and humbled, and God alone be honoured in the very way of his recovery. That that evil Humour that had cauſed his Sickneſs ſhould be purged out, and a contrary quality infuſed into him in order to the reſtoring of his Health. 'Tis agreeable to the Eternal Reaſon of things, that ſo vile a Criminal ſhould be brought on his Knees, laid in the Duſt, in the loweſt poſture imaginable, in order to the receiving ſo high an act of Grace. That ſuch extremely miſerable Wretches, and yet ſuch haughty, ſwelling and lofty Creatures too, ſhould have thoſe proud looks of theirs taken down, that firſt brought them into, and ſtill accompanied them in that moſt deplorable ſtate. Now this God hath moſt effectually provided for by ſuch a diſpenſation as we are now treating of: And if the Apoſtle may be believed, it was his great *deſign* therein. He hath *not called many wiſe men after the* 1 Cor. 1. 25, 31. *fleſh, but hath choſen the fooliſh and the weak things of the World, that no fleſh might glory in his preſence; but that whoſoever glorieth, ſhould glory in the Lord alone.* Had God taken a contrary method, boaſting had not been excluded. For natural and acquired Parts, when alone, are exceeding apt to puff up. Much more would Men

Men be prone to be exalted in their own Eyes, if ſpecial Grace alſo, like a Crown of Gold, were commonly put upon theſe Mens Heads. And on the other hand, even thoſe that have renewing Grace only, and little or nothing beſides to recommend them, yet are apt to ſwell: which is ſo evident, that the Men of the World take notice of it, there being no Sin which they are more ready to reproach the Generation of the Righteous withal, than ſpiritual *Pride*, except it be *Hypocriſie*. And in truth, this Worm is apt to breed even in this Mannah that comes down from Heaven, not from the nature of the Grace it ſelf, but from the corruption of thoſe Veſſels wherein 'tis put: How much more were ſaving-knowledge given to Men of refined Parts, would they be prone to be lifted up, and not aſcribe all with that lowlineſs of mind that becomes them to the free grace of God alone. Inſtead of admiring him, they would be applauding themſelves. They and others too would be tempted to aſcribe all to their own excellency and deſerts. It would be thought that a ſpiritual underſtanding of Divine things was not the effect of God's Teaching, but of the ſtrength of their own Wit and Labour. That this choice Plant, like the Fruits of the Field in the beginning

of the World, did ſpring out of the
Gen. 2. 5, 6. *ground*, and did thrive and flouriſh, not by the Rain falling down from Heaven, but by Vertue of that *miſt that went up from the Earth* it ſelf. But now God clearly confutes any ſuch vain imaginations, and openly Proclaims that none of theſe Excellencies were motive to him. Seeing he paſſes by the *great* ones of the World, who, by reaſon of their noble Qualifications, appear Beautiful in our Eyes, as *Eliab* did in *Samuel*'s, and will not pour
1 John 2. 20. out the *Unction of the Holy One that teacheth all things*, on their heads and hearts (as the Prophet would not the anointing Oil on *Eliab*) but generally on the meaneſt of all the People, he *ſtains the glory of Man*, and plainly declares, to the ſilencing and humbling of all Fleſh, the abſolute freeneſs of the unſearchable riches of the Glory of his own Grace.

(2.) By ſuch a Diſpenſation, God *pours contempt and ſcorn on that wiſdom for which his Enemies ſo much deſpiſe him, and magnifie themſelves.* Men of great Abilities are apt to have the ſame extravagant fancy concerning themſelves, as that blind
Mark 8. 24. Man whoſe Eyes were half open'd, had of other Men, that they walk *like Trees*, far above the ordinary height and ſtature of Mankind. And they look down with ſcorn on the ways of Chriſt, and upon his

his Followers as a *rabble of fools and madmen.* But what a mortification may it well be to these Men now, and will it certainly be at the last day, to see those very Persons, whom they thus despise, Crown'd with Eternal Glory, to which their own so much admired Wisdom was so far from advancing them, that it rather help'd, like bags of Gold about a drowning Man, to plunge them the deeper into Hell! The flames of that infernal Pit shall at once manifest their folly, and punish it; and the Darkness thereof shall not be their only covering; for this very thing shall spread an Eternal Shame and Confusion upon their Souls. Like those of old they count *the Table of the Lord contemptible, and the meat*, and those that sit and eat thereof. *Therefore* will the Lord *also make them contemptible and base before all* his *people* in the generally Assembly of his first-born. How will they then be forced to say, We fools thought their life madness, but now it appears that ours was so; and surely these are the only wise and understanding People. *Mal.* 1.7. *Mal.* 2.9.

(3.) The Wisdom of God is seen herein, *in bringing such weak Persons safely to Heaven, and carrying on his interest in the World by them.* 'Tis certainly an Argument of great Wisdom so to order matters, as by little contemptible things to

overcome ſtrong ones. Now God ſuffers Satan to have almoſt all the advantages that he could deſire. He is a very ſubtil Spirit; and generally all the policy of Earth, as well as of Hell, is on his ſide for the ſtrengthning of his Party. And how unequal a match are the poor weak Followers of Chriſt to cope and grapple with ſuch Enemies whoſe policy is ſo much ſuperiour to theirs? How unlikely is it to an Eye of Senſe and Reaſon, that theſe Men ſhould in ſpight of all, bear up Chriſt's Name, propagate his Intereſt, drive on his great Counſels in the World, ſend others to Heaven, and at laſt ſafely reach it themſelves? It is one great Argument that our Religion is of God, that it was propagated by ſuch feeble Inſtruments, againſt ſuch mighty Enemies as the Philoſophers and Princes of this World; and the *ſweet ſavour of the knowledge of* a 2 Cor. 2. 14, 15. Crucified *Jeſus* was diffuſed every-where; not like the Spices of *Arabia* upon the Wings of the Wind, but againſt a furious one that aroſe from every corner of the Earth. The Skill of a Commander is very much diſcover'd in ſecuring the retreat of a few feeble and raw Men, during a long March, quite through the Enemies Country, while a powerful and well-diſciplin'd Army, under the Conduct of a Politick General, hovers about them, watching

watching all advantages to defeat them; but 'tis much more for his honour if he brings them off with Victory. When by the *mouths of babes and ſucklings* God not only *ſtills the Enemy and the Avenger*, but Conquers him too; he *perfects the praiſes* of his own Power and Wiſdom. Pſal 8.2.

(4.) The Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God is ſhewn herein, becauſe *hereby he prevents the meaneſt of his Creatures being diſcouraged from ſeeking after ſaving-knowledge.* Whatever the *proud Sinners that are at eaſe in* Sion, may imagine, yet to a poor convinced Soul that hath a lively view of the Divine Majeſty and Greatneſs, it ſeems almoſt incredible that ever the King of Kings ſhould ſtoop ſo much below himſelf, as to caſt a favourable Eye on ſuch a *Flea*, ſuch a *dead Dog* as he: who is ſenſible, not only that he hath been the greateſt of Sinners, but is one of the meaneſt of Men; and whoſe Abilities are ſo ſmall, or rather none, that he can ſignifie no more to the advancing his Intereſt, than the very duſt of the ballance to the turning of the Scales. We naturally think God is *altogether ſuch a one as our ſelves*; that we muſt have ſome good qualities to recommend us to his favour, as well as to that of Men. None of us will Trade to Barren Countries; and we fancy there can be 1 *Sam.* 24. 14. Pſal 50. 51.

no Commerce between us and Heaven, unleſs there be ſome excellency of our own native growth to invite and encourage it. But now by this Diſpenſation God ſhews on the contrary, how much he values the precious Souls of the loweſt of his Creatures. That he doth not do by the Treaſures of his Wiſdom and Knowledge as Princes do by thoſe of their Earthly Subſtance, lock them up from vulgar Eyes; but is ready to open his Arms and his Heart to thoſe that humbly ſit at his feet, and are willing to learn of him, how mean ſoever their ſtate and condition may be. So much for the Wiſdom of Chriſt.

2. Chriſt rejoices and give thanks, becauſe *the hiding theſe things from the wiſe and prudent, is an act of high juſtice in God.* And that upon theſe three following accounts.

(1.) *Such men do deſpiſe and reject the Myſteries of the Goſpel.* Tho' there are many things in Nature which they cannot underſtand, and dare not deny; yet they are exceeding nice and tender about Myſteries in matters of Religion, 'Tis below Men of their refined Parts and piercing Intellectuals, to aſſent to any thing which they cannot graſp; 'tis for Children to ſwallow Phyſick which they do

do not understand. They are subtil to evade the force of the strongest Arguments, start many plausible Objections against the plainest truths, which weaker heads never dream of; smart and witty to represent them as contemptible and ridiculous. The barren Sands cannot send up so many Vapours to keep off the light of the Sun, as the richer and fatter Soil does. These are the Men that above all others have many high and proud thoughts, and vain imaginations, exalting themselves in their Souls against the knowledge of the Gospel, and will not be brought into Captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 *Cor.* 10. 4, 5.

(2.) With the greatest scorn *they refuse the grand condition of the Gospel-Covenant.* To rely on Christ alone for Salvation, when they have so many rare things of their own to depend on: to stand begging at anothers door, and with deep humility and brokenness of heart to sue for Pardon and Salvation meerly from the Mercy of God, and the Merits of a Redeemer, 'tis such a Mortification as their high Spirits can by no means endure to think or hear of. Like foolish Children, they have the advantage of the ground, and therefore think themselves taller, their heads touch the Clouds, and are nearer Heaven than others. To lye at the foot

of

of a Crucified Saviour, they judge a posture more ſuitable for thoſe vile ones of the Earth that are not raiſed up out of the Duſt; but as for them, they will never be brought to it, till like *Paul*, they are *ſtruck down to the ground*. And even then too generally, when they are convinced of their Sins, and pained at the heart about them, they chooſe any other way to the Father; and if they find themſelves under a neceſſity of returning to God, they will rather do it in their own names, than his: And this is the ſpring of all that *Theiſm* that begins to ſpread ſo much among theſe Men in our days. To look on all they have done, or can do, as *droſs and dung*; to lay aſide their own Wiſdom and Prudence, for which they are ſo highly valued both by themſelves and others; to be juſtified by the Righteouſneſs of another; *to rejoice in Jeſus Chriſt, having no confidence in the fleſh*; to be ruled and ſaved by him alone, 'tis not a thing ſuitable to the greatneſs of their minds. They would fain be doing ſomewhat that ſhould diſtinguiſh them from the dregs of the People, and recommend them to the Divine favour and acceptance. They are not more deſirous that their own Wills ſhould be their Lord's, than that the Works of their own hands ſhould be their

Phil. 3. 3.

their Saviour's. They bear up themſelves on empty Bladders, fill'd with nothing but wind, and deſpiſe that Ark of God's Building, wherein alone they can avoid ſinking in the ſtorms of Divine Wrath and Vengeance: and tho' Glorified Saints in Heaven above, *caſt their Crowns at Chriſt's feet*, yet theſe haughty Sinners here below, ſcornfully refuſe to do it. Rev. 4. 10

(3.) *They deſperately hate the great duties of holineſs.* That firſt and fundamental thing which is required as preparatory to our learning of Chriſt, the renouncing our own Underſtandings, and becoming as *little Children*; the mortifying of our beloved Luſts, Crucifying the Fleſh with all its affections, purifying the Heart, loving our Enemies, denying our ſelves, taking up the Croſs, and ſuffering the loſs of all things, even their darling Reputation; Theſe are hard ſayings, againſt which their hearts exceedingly riſe within them, as a Man's Bloud would do at the ſight of one that would Murther his deareſt Friend. And when at any time any ſerious thoughts are flaſht into their minds, they run through their Souls like lightning through the Air, which never warms it, and quickly vaniſhes. They cloſe their eyes, turn away their faces; 'tis the Language of their Hearts and Lives, *Depart from us, we deſire not the knowledge of* Mat. 18. 3. Job 21. 14.

theſe

theſe ways. They love and cheriſh *darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds*
John 3. 19. *are evil.* Righteous therefore art thou, O Lord, juſt and true are thy Judgments, O thou God of all Grace, when thou
2 Cor. 4. 4. ſuffereſt the *God of this World to blind the minds of theſe men, that the light of the glorious Goſpel of Chriſt may not ſhine in their hearts.*

3. Chriſt rejoices in, and gives Thanks for ſuch a Diſpenſation, becauſe *the power of God is magnified herein.* He ſhews himſelf to be the mighty *Lord of Heaven and Earth*, in revealing theſe things unto Babes. In making the ſimple wiſe unto Salvation, elevating their weak Underſtandings to a ſaving apprehenſion of thoſe matters, which the Wiſeſt and moſt Learned of themſelves are not capable of attaining unto; He ſhews the power of his own grace to be far above the force of Nature when raiſed to its higheſt Pitch and Glory. When he makes things that *are not*, do more than things that *are*; enables them that have not Logick enough, to perceive the force of an Argument in other matters, yet underſtand
1 Cor. 2. 4. the *demonſtration of the Spirit*, which the moſt Learned *cannot know becauſe 'tis ſpi-*
Ver. 14. *ritually diſcerned*; thoſe that can't ſearch into the vulgar Subjects of Philoſophy, much leſs into the abſtruſer parts of it,

ſee

ſee into the profound depths of the Divine Wiſdom ; thoſe whoſe diſcourſes on all other Arguments are weak and trifling, yet can ſpeak of God, Chriſt, Heaven, and the great things of the Goſpel in ſuch an admirable manner, that the beſt Scholars may not only be aſtoniſh'd at them as the Rulers were when *they perceived Peter and John were ignorant and unlearned men* ; but be inſtructed by them too, as *Priſcilla*, the Wife of a poor Tentmaker, *expounded the way of the Lord more perfectly to an eloquent Apollos*. Thoſe that are not able to dive into the cunning Intrigues of Stateſmen, ſhall pierce into the infinitely deeper Counſels of God's Will : Thoſe that can't manage the Affairs of this Life with common diſcretion, but are eaſily over-reach'd by their Neighbours in every buſineſs, yet are *not ignorant of Satan's devices*, nor entangled by the cunning *craftineſs of them that lie in wait to deceive* them to their Eternal ruine : Thoſe that are dull and heavy in other matters, yet are *of a quick underſtanding in the fear of the Lord*, and *though fools, yet they err not in the way of holineſs*, in which *the unclean*, though never ſo knowing, *cannot paſs* : He that doth theſe things, declares himſelf to be a God that worketh wonders.

Acts 4. 13.

Acts 18. 3, 26.

Iſa. 11. 3.

Iſa. 35. 8.

Behold,

Job 36. 22. *Behold, God exalteth* himſelf *by his Power; who teacheth like him,* that makes dull Scholars *underſtand in writing, by his* 1 Chron. 28. 19. *Hand upon them,* how to perform thoſe Duties and excel in thoſe Graces, which the greateſt Men of this World can't ſo much as know what to make of, much leſs can they imitate? To be humble in Proſperity, to live by Faith in Adverſity; James 1. 9, 10. for *a Brother of high Degree to rejoyce when he is brought low,* as much as other Men when they are raiſed up; to love the moſt bitter Enemies, and hate the deareſt Friends and Relations; when there Hab. 3. 17. *is no fruit in the Vines,* yet to ſit chearfully under their Shadow, *rejoycing in the Lord, and joying in the God of their Salvation*; to ſet their Affections on things above, while they are here below; have their Converſation in Heaven, while they dwell on Earth; to be *killed all* Col. 3. 3. *the day long,* and yet believe *their Life is hid with Chriſt in God,* where their Enemies Swords can't reach them; to be diligent in their Callings, and yet *careful for nothing*; to bear Burdens, and yet *caſt them all upon God*; carefully to preſerve their Lives, and yet *hate* them too, and deſire Death, longing to depart and be with Chriſt; to be meek under Reproach and Injury; when ſmitten on the one Cheek to turn, not to requite the Affront, but

but offer the other alſo to the ſame Indignity: In a word, to live by the Spirit, walk by the Strength, do the Will and deſign the Glory, not of themſelves, but of another whom *they never ſaw, yet they love, in whom tho' now they ſee him not, yet they believe and rejoice,* and that ſometimes *with joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.* 1 Pet. 1. 8.

Theſe are things which God by his teaching enables many ſimple Men to do; things that the Wiſe and Prudent can't ſo much as underſtand, but gaze and wonder at them as if they were not only Myſteries and Riddles, but Impoſſibilities and Contradictions; when they hear us mention them, we are *Barbarians* to them, and ſpeak a Language which they know not. He that doth all this, teaches with a wonderful Authority and a mighty Power.

4. Chriſt rejoyces and give thanks, becauſe in ſuch a Diſpenſation, the *Soveraignty of God is declared.* This is an Attribute that Men do not much care to hear of, as if it were like thoſe Flouriſhes and Pictures that we ſee in Maps, placed there to fill up ſome void room, but of no real uſe. And 'tis very remarkable, that for Preaching this very Doctrine of the Soveraignty of God in the free diſtribution of his ſpecial Favours, without any regard to humane Worth or Excel-

lency; Christ himself was in danger of being *murther'd*. For when he discoursed to the Men of *Nazareth* about *one* only Widow and she of *Sarepta*, fed by *Elijah*; and *one Naaman*, and he a *Syrian* too, Cured by him; there being many Widows and Lepers, and they in *Israel* also, who were passed by, tho' they might (one would have thought) have pretended a better Title to such a Favour, than these Uncircumcised Gentiles; the Men of the place were filled with Indignation against a Preacher of such Doctrine, and endeavoured to cast him down headlong from the brow of the Hill. But vain Men may think as they please; this is one Letter of God's Name which he himself did not leave out when he Proclaimed it, and caused his Glory and Goodness to pass before *Moses*; *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious*. Christ himself, in my Text, rises up as high as this Well-head, and acquiesces in this, *even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight*. And hither must we resort for Satisfaction; and here must we rest at last. If a Reason be asked of any Person, absolutely consider'd, Why is God savingly made known unto him? It does not savour of Evangelical Humility nor a Gospel Spirit, to say, Because he was more worthy, or (as some mince the matter) be-

Luke 4. 25.

Ver 20.

Exod. 33. 19.

† cause

cauſe he was leſs unworthy : The Scripture anſwer is, *'Tis not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth Mercy ; according to his meer Mercy and Grace, and not for any Works of Righteouſneſs which he hath done.* If the Queſtion be asked of any one abſolutely conſider'd, Why are not Goſpel Truths ſavingly made known to him ? 'Tis a Truth that will ſtop his Mouth ; and his own Conſcience will atteſt it by ſinning againſt natural Light and common Grace, he hath deſerved it, and there is no unrighteouſneſs in God. But now take them comparatively, and if you ask, Why doth God reveal Divine Myſteries to two or three wiſe Men only in an Age, and not to the reſt ? Why to *Paul* the Scholar, whom tho' (as *Feſtus* imagined) much Learning had not made Mad, yet Rage againſt the Goſpel made him exceedingly ſo ; and not to *Gamaliel* the Maſter a moderate and ſober Man that gave very gentle Counſel in favour of the firſt Preachers of Chriſtianity, and was *in great Reputation among the People* ? Or if you ask Why ſhould God paſs by the generality of wiſe Men, pitch his Love upon, and give his ſaving Grace unto inferiour Perſons for the moſt part ? What, could he not have torn off the Veil from the Heart of the one as well as of the other ? Was not the

Rom. 9. 16. *Titus* 3. 5. *Acts* 26. 24. *Acts* 5. 34.

reſidue of the Spirit with him? Yes ſurely, for he is *Lord of Heaven and Earth*, and hath all Power and all Hearts in his Hands. He could have made the Dews of his ſaving Grace, as Univerſal as the Drops of the Morning. He could have made his Miniſters have blown the Goſpel Trumpet with ſuch a Breath, made it give ſo loud a ſound, that like the laſt Trump at the Mouth of an Angel, it ſhould have awakened all that are dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, and made them to revive.

Mal. 2. 15.

Why therefore hath he not done it? If you anſwer, he ſhews his Power, Wiſdom and Juſtice, in leaving them under Spiritual Darkneſs; it may be replied, theſe very Attributes of Wiſdom and Power, beſides that of his Infinite Goodneſs he might have glorified the other way; and his Juſtice had a large Field to diſplay it ſelf in the puniſhment of Apoſtate Angels. Why therefore hath he not done it? You muſt Center in this at laſt, becauſe his Grace is free; he is *debtor to no Man*; he doth with his own what *ſeemeth good in his own Eyes*; he faſhions the *ſame Lump* of filthy and untemper'd *Clay* into what Veſſels he pleaſes. And who art thou, O Man! that dareſt to diſpute or reply againſt thy Maker? Be ſtill, O proud Duſt! and know that he is God, and a great King over all the Earth. Bowels of Mercy

Rom. 9. 20, 21.

Mercy made the Motion at first ; the Eye of Wisdom directed the Management of the whole ; the right hand of Power was there to assist ; Justice did not open its Mouth to contradict ; and Soveraignty (as it became that Attribute) sate upon a Glorious high Throne, far above all the Heavens, and from all Eternity selected the particular Persons, whom according to the Counsel of its own Will, it resolved should be infallibly brought to Salvation through the knowledge and belief of the Truth,

III. In the last place I shall Briefly apply all.

1. By way of Information in six Things.

1. *Hence learn, 'tis no great wonder there are so many Follies, Weaknesses and Miscarriages, among the sincere followers of Christ.* They are a plain, simple, illiterate sort of People, for the most part, that mind the Power of Religion, and but few of the prudent ones of this World among them. And therefore, though they are Wise as to the main, in as much as they avoid the greatest Dangers, and secure their biggest Interest ; yet it can't be expected they should manage themselves and all their Affairs, according to the exact Rules of Humane Policy, which they generally want ; and 'tis not strange,

if in many ſingle inſtances of a lower nature, they frequently miſtake their Way, and take many a falſe Step. A Mariner may have ſo much Skill in Sea Affairs, as to be able to ſteer his Ship through the main Ocean, and make a good Voyage even to the *Indies*, eſcaping the great Rocks and mighty Sands; and yet not know the way into a particular Port, ſo well as an ordinary Pilot of the Place, but be apt (through miſtake) ſo run his Veſſel a-ground, where it may receive great Damage, and be very difficultly brought off again.

2. *See one reaſon, why the ableſt Miniſters are ſeldom ſo ſucceſsful in their Work as thoſe that are more meanly furniſh'd.* Like Canon mounted too high, they ſhoot over the Heads of inferiour Perſons, whom generally God hath ordained to Eternal Life; and ſo they *beat the Air*, but batter down no ſtrong Holds; and are qualified to deal with the wiſe and more rational part of Mankind, among whom God hath not much People, nor Chriſt many Sheep. The moſt Soveraign Remedies prepared according to Art, ſhall have no Succeſs, when *Clay and Spittle* (if Chriſt will but uſe it) ſhall reſtore Sight to thoſe blind Creatures, on whom he hath reſolved the *Works of God ſhall be made manifeſt.*

John 9. 6.

Ver. 3.

3. *See*

3. *See the Vanity of that Objection againſt ſerious Religion, drawn from the meanneſs of thoſe that ſincerely embrace it*, when the far greateſt part of the famous Men are on the other ſide. This is an old Engine of the Devils, *Have any of the Rulers or the Phariſees believed on him?* John 7. 48. The weakneſs of this Argument appears from what hath been ſaid: And indeed, if it be of any force againſt a ſincere embracing of Chriſt's ways, it will hold good againſt the practice of common Morality. For 'tis very evident, that Multitudes of the Wiſe and Prudent Ones of this World, are wholly eaten up with their Luſts, as the choiceſt Trees are devoured by Caterpillars.

4. *See the reaſon, why weak Chriſtians more ſtedfaſtly adhere to Chriſt, his Ways and Truths, in times of danger than the wiſe and prudent.* This ſaving Revelation of Divine Things, fixes and eſtabliſhes their Hearts, and keeps them faſter in the Faith than others can be held by meer dry Reaſon and naked Arguments; ſo, that though they are none of the great Scholars of the World, nor able to anſwer the ſpecious Arguments of ſubtil Hereticks, yet 'tis not *poſſible* that all the Craft and Policy of Hell ſhould finally *deceive* them. For they that are thus taught of God, have a ſpiritual Senſe Mat. 24. 24.

and Judgment to discern between Good
1 *John* 2. and Evil; they inwardly know, and have a
20, 21, 27. Witness within themselves of the truth of what this *Unction* hath taught them. And therefore, as all Creatures, Plants as well as Animals, have a natural instinct whereby they draw to them what is proper for their Preservation and Nourishment, but avoid what is destructive to them: So these Persons to whom God hath spiritually reveal'd his Truths, have a supernatural Instinct whereby they turn aside from pernicious Errors, and unmoveably retain the great Things of the Gospel with a mighty relish and savour. They can't be beaten out of that Truth which hath been so plainly discover'd; they know these things to be great Realities, that have made such a deep Impression on their Hearts; and tho' they can't Learnedly dispute, they can couragiously dye for them rather than deny them. They will not be disputed out of them, no more than a Man will be perswaded that Honey is not sweet, which his Senses tell him is so; tho' some Sophistical Arguments may be propounded against it, which he has not skill enough to answer. This Divine Knowledge, like polished Armour, adorns them in the sight of God, and defends them from the fiery Darts of wicked Men.

5. *See*

5. *See what the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt muſt expect, and not be diſcouraged at it.* They are the poor only, that for the moſt part will receive Us and our Meſſage: And 'tis no very great Service that we do our Maſter or his Intereſt, by bringing in ſuch as theſe. But yet, tho' they are the Poor, the Maimed, the Halt, the Blind, (ſuch as we can pick up in the *Streets and Lanes*, or gather up by the *High-ways or Hedges*,) he refuſes not them for his Table, nor will he be angry with us, unleſs it be, becauſe his Houſe is not filled with them. For our comfort, if we are but faithful in our Work, we ſhall be a ſweet ſavour to God in thoſe that are ſaved, though they are but inferiour Perſons; and in thoſe that periſh too, though they are the Great and Honourables Ones of the Earth. *Luke* 14. 21. *Ver.* 23.

6. Hence I infer, *we ſhould not idolize the greateſt, nor contemn the meaneſt.* This is what the Apoſtle reproves; and to take Men off from it, he propounds this Queſtion to their ſerious conſideration, *Hearken, my beloved Brethren, hath not God choſen the poor of this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promiſed to them that love him?* 'Tis great Folly not to prefer a rough Diamond before a counterfeit Stone, tho' curiouſly cut and ſet to the greateſt ad- *James* 2. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

vantage. We ſhould not judge according to outward Appearance; for thoſe that ſeem but little in our Eyes, may be, and frequently are, of mighty value; as the Stars that look like ſmall Sparks in the Skies only, are in truth, very Great and Glorious Bodies.

2. *Uſe. Exhort.* To thoſe from whom theſe things are hid; and thoſe to whom they are revealed.

1. *To thoſe from whom theſe things are hid*; chiefly the Wiſe and Prudent, tho' not excluding Perſons of a lower Station.

(1.) *Be not proud of nor ſatisfied with any Wiſdom or Knowledge, while the great things of God are not ſavingly underſtood by you.* Some that have drunk as largely at thoſe Fountains as any of you, have ſolemnly profeſſed, they have found more ſweetneſs and ſatisfaction of Soul, in one drop of a Spiritual Knowledge of Divine Myſteries, than in a whole Ocean of other Learning. They have looked on the deepeſt inſight into all other things, to be, in compariſon of this, but as congealed Drops of Water that may look bright and pleaſing, but 'tis to Children and Fools; but this, this alone hath been the Pearl of great Price in their account. All Humane Wiſdom and Knowledge, though uſeful and valuable in its due Place and Order, yet is but like an Eye of Chryſtal

in

in the Head of a blind Man, which may hide his Deformity from the obſervation of his Neighbours, but can't direct him one ſtep in the way wherein he ought to go. The Devils have as much and more of this than the beſt of us, and yet are the moſt miſerable of all God's Creatures. Why will you highly value your ſelves on the account of that, which leaves you in as bad a Condition as thoſe wretched Apoſtate Spirits, and in a worſe State than the moſt ignorant Man that hath a ſpiritual Underſtanding of Heavenly Things? If you have no more than this, you ſhall periſh at laſt for lack of Knowledge. For at the laſt Day, it ſhall fare with thoſe curious Wits that are ignorant of God and Chriſt, as with Carved Statues about a Houſe that is ſet on Fire; down they drop into the Flames, and are conſumed, there being none at hand to pluck them out.

(2.) *Seriouſly meditate on the deplorable State of thoſe from whom theſe things are hid.* 'Tis a ſad thing when God hides common Wiſdom and Prudence from Men, as to the Affairs of this Life. When God infatuates, 'tis a ſign he intends to deſtroy. When *Hamans* Face was cover'd with a Cloth, he was near his Execution. When God throws a Veil over the Face of Mens Minds, and hides from them the things

things that belong to their Peace, they are on the very Borders of ruin. 'Tis ſad to be given up to judicial Blindneſs as to any Objects; but to be ſo as to Divine Myſteries, ſo as to ſee no Glory nor Beauty in them, is the worſt of all. *If our Goſpel be hid, 'tis hid from them that are loſt*; they are loſt Men indeed, and undone Creatures, unleſs Infinite Mercy ſpeedily give them an Heart to perceive, to whom ſuch a Blindneſs hath happened.

2 Cor. 4. 3.

(3.) If you are *wiſe and prudent*, be provoked unto a godly Jealouſie, by thoſe that are comparatively a fooliſh People; be not out-ſtript in matters of the greateſt Moment, by thoſe that in other things are ſo much below you.

If you are *inferiour* Perſons, let not your meanneſs diſcourage you; ſeeing of ſuch as you is the Kingdom of Heaven. Princes on their Coronation days, uſe to ſcatter rich Medals among the common People; ſo doth Chriſt theſe Gifts of his. Do not you loſe them for want of ſtriving for them.

(4.) *Renounce all your Wiſdom and Learning which you really have, or fancy you are poſſeſſed of. If any Man among you ſeemeth to be wiſe in this world, let him become a Fool that he may be wiſe.*

1 Cor. 3. 18.

2. To thoſe to *whom theſe things are revealed.* (1.) *Be*

(1.) *Be humble.* Fleſh and Bloud hath not revealed theſe things to you. Had not the Dew of Heaven fallen upon you, you had ſtill been dry Trees and withered Branches. Out of free rich undeſerved Grace, *to you it is given* of God *to know theſe Myſteries*; to others *it is not given*; be not proud and lofty as though you did not know your ſelves. Mat. 13. 11.

(2.) *Rejoice and give thanks.* If you are *Wiſe and Prudent*, Adore that Soveraign Grace that ſtept out of its uſual Rode to meet with thee; why art thou better than others that ſate as high as thou doſt, that God ſhould ſingle thee out to anoint thee with this Oyl above thy Fellows, and thine Equals, whom he generally overlooks? If you are *meaner* Perſons; what are you that ſo Rich a Treaſure ſhould be put into ſuch an Earthen Veſſel? *Stones* ſhould not hold their peace, but cry out aloud with the voice of Joy and Praiſe, when they are turned into *Children of Abraham.* Holy Men in all Ages have Admired and Adored this diſtinguiſhing Grace. *Judas ſaith to him, (not Iſcariot) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifeſt thy ſelf to us and not to the World!* The Holy Ghoſt takes care that we ſhould not miſtake the Perſon that was thus affected with theſe ſpecial Diſcoveries. It was a *Judas*, but not *Iſcariot*; not that Luke 19. 40. John 14. 22.

Vile

Vile Traytor, not that Son of Perdition: No, it was another kind of Perſon, a better Man than he, tho' one of the ſame Name. Such Men know not the ſweetneſs of that Wine they never taſted of; and therefore admire not the goodneſs of the Maſter of the Feaſt, in the diſtribution of it. Chriſt rejoiced and gave thanks for the Revelation of theſe things to others; and will not you do it for the diſcovery of them to your ſelves? Had you the Tongue of Angels or Power over Devils, you would not have ſo great cauſe of Rejoycing and Singing Praiſes as you now have, becauſe God's Law is written on your Hearts and your *Names in Heaven.*

(3.) *Envy not the excellent Gifts of others that are ſtrangers to the grace of God in truth.* For you have the better part. Tho' the ſurface of the Field appear mean and barren, yet the rich Mines contained in the Bowels of it, render it exceeding more valuable than another Soil, that is Fat and Flouriſhing.

(4.) *Endeavour to grow and improve in this ſaving Knowledge.* Your Minds are not yet open'd ſo wide as they may be, to receive the higheſt ſight and ſenſe of theſe things; no more than a Flower is full-blown in one day, but inſenſibly cleaves its Hood, and gradually opens it ſelf

ſelf to our view. Spiritual Underſtanding, like the natural One, ſhould come on by little and little; and the Sons of God, like the Children of Men, be daily growing up in Wiſdom and Stature.

(5.) *Long for Heaven, where your Knowledge ſhall be compleated.* 'Tis with us here below, as with a Man that walks in a cloudy Night, that makes a hard ſhift to perceive firſt one Star, and by and by two or three more; but ſtill there is a vaſt number of them which he cannot diſcern. Something we know, and gradually make ſome few freſh Diſcoveries; but how great a Portion is hid from us? Whereas in Heaven, all that Ignorance ſhall be removed, that now hangs about us like the Relicks of a broken Cloud on the top of a Mountain: All that Duſt ſhall be blown out of our Eyes, that at preſent obſtructs our Sight. The Sacred Volumes have many Glorious things written in them, which we can't yet diſcern, becauſe they are according to the ancient Form of Books, rolled up; which, tho' God be gradually unfolding, yet 'tis in Heaven only that they ſhall be fully ſtretched out, and lye all plain and open before us. There ſhall not be a greater and more glorious Change of the dull Matter of theſe vile Bodies, than in our dark Souls when we reach Heaven; both ſhall ſhine clear as the Light

at Noon-day. Our Notions here are broken, confuſed and imperfect, like the rude Images in the Fancies of them that dream; which we our ſelves ſhall *deſpiſe* upon our *awakning* in that Morning, when we ſhall behold God's Face, and be ſatisfied with the Viſion of him as well as with our Likeneſs to him.

Pſal. 73. 20.

Pſal. 17. 15.

(6.) *Follow the Example of Chriſt in an humble Adoration of the good Pleaſure of God, as to thoſe things which may ſeem very ſtrange to you.* I might preſs this as to his *Laws*, *Ordinances* and *Providences*. When you meet with many hard Chapters in the Book of Nature, Scripture and Providence, which you are not able to read and underſtand; don't cavil and wrangle; lay your Hands on your Mouths; or if you do open them, ſay no more than thus, with the greateſt lowlineſs of Mind, *Even ſo Father, for ſo it pleaſeth thee. O the depth of the Riches, both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways paſt finding out!*

Rom. 11. 33.

Laſtly, *Lay out your ſelves to the utmoſt, for the advancing of God's Honour and Intereſt.* This is the Duty of all Men; and in a peculiar manner, of Chriſtian *Magiſtrates* that have been taught of God. And the fewer of the great Ones of this World, are on Chriſt's ſide; ſo much the more zealous and active ſhould thoſe few

be. You cannot indeed, *give of your Oyl* unto the fooliſh Virgins; yet you may reflect the *Light* of it in good Works, ſhining before Men, and induce them to glorifie your Heavenly Father. And if you do not do this, it had been better for you, you had ſtill continued under the *Buſhel*, remained in your former Obſcurity, than to be thus advanced on a high Hill. 'Tis a ſerious Queſtion that will e're long be put to all of you, by one that hath Authority to ask it, and *will* have an Anſwer; ſeeing I have done ſo much for you more than for others, *what have you done for me more than others?* And I hope, you will betimes bethink your ſelves what Reply to make, and labour to be ready furniſhed with a very good one. If you behave your ſelves like Wiſe and Faithful Magiſtrates, the Power you have now in your Hands, and the Grace of God *ruling in your Hearts and Lives*, while you Rule over Men; will exceedingly recommend Religion to others, and ſet it off with great Advantage. Divine Wiſdom and Knowledge in an Aſſembly of Men in Authority, are like flaming Tapers in a Branch of burniſhed Gold, whoſe glittering and ſparkling Subſtance returns Light as well as receives it; ſheds a Glory on the Room where it hangs, and at once draws and dazzles the Eyes of all both far and near. *I have ſaid ye are Gods*; but be not like the uſeleſs Idols of the Heathens, that are empty and hollow within, that only fill up the void Places where they ſtand; and tho' Worſhipped by the People, have neither Eyes to ſee and diſcern between Good and Evil, nor Hands to work Righteouſneſs. Tho' you are a ſort of inferiour Deities, yet remember you muſt *dye like Men*; ſo live therefore in your preſent Sta-

Luke 11. 33.

Pſal. 82. 6.

Ver. 7.

tions,

tions, *as the Children of the moſt High*, that you may not dye in a Civil or a natural Senſe, *as a Fool dyeth*. Encourage Religion; puniſh and ſuppreſs that Profanation of God's Name and Sabbaths, that Debauchery and Immorality which to this day walks too open and bare-faced in the midſt of us. Steadily own the truths of God wherein you have been inſtructed. Plead his Cauſe in your Places; maintain, promote, encourage his Intereſt; *not that of any ſingle Party among us*. This is the Duty of Magiſtrates as well as Divines. For *you alſo are the Miniſters of God*. In our Saviours Glorious Transfiguration on the Mount, not only *Elias* the Prophet, but *Moſes* alſo, the Ruler of the People, appeared and waited on him. Chriſt and his Intereſt will never be lifted up on high, nor ſhine in their Luſtre and Glory in the World, till *both* theſe are with him. If you reſolve to be ſo, you muſt expect Reproaches, and deſpiſe them. Let all the Revilings which Men pour out againſt you, be to you as Snow to the Ground, that comes down upon the Earth *like Wooll*, ſoft and eaſie, making no noiſe nor diſturbance where it falls. Whatever a few Fools may ſay againſt you, this will be your Wiſdom and Honour in the ſight of the whole Nation, and redound to your Eternal Advantage. For if you do theſe things, then you, to whom *it is given to know the Myſteries of his Kingdom*, to you alſo ſhall it be given to behold the Glory, and enjoy the Rewards of it. When not only yours and all other Civil Power ſhall be at an end; but the Mediatorial Kingdom of God-Redeemer too ſhall ceaſe, and the Father be all in all; you ſhall be advanced to Thrones of Glory near his right Hand, where there are Rivers of Joy for you to drink of, and Pleaſures that flow for evermore.

Rom. 13. 4.

Pſa. 147. 16.

F I N I S.